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From Vita Nuova to Paradiso

Published by the University of Manchester at
THE UNIVERSITY PRESS (H. M. McKechnie, M.A., Secretary)
12 Lime Grove, Oxford Road, MANCHESTER

LONGMANS, GREEN & CO.
London : 39 Paternoster Row, E.C.4
New York : 55 Fifth Avenue
Bombay : 336 Hornby Road
Calcutta : 6 Old Court House Street
Madras : 167 Mount Road

From
Vita Nuova to Paradiso

TWO ESSAYS

on the vital relations between Dante's successive works

By

PHILIP H. WICKSTEED, M.A., Litt.D.

1922

Manchester . . . At the University Press

London, New York, &c.: Longmans, Green & Co.

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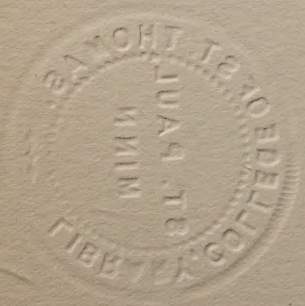

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And this is what Rabbi Hanina said: "I have learned much from my teachers; and from my companions more than from my teachers; and from my pupils more than from all."

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PREFATORY SYNOPSIS

I suppose it is still true (as it certainly was not long ago) that the successive Cantiche of Dante's Comedy appeal to successively narrowing circles of readers. Many who are fairly acquainted with representative portions at least of the *Inferno*, and in whose minds Dante ranks high as a poet on the strength of them, have but the vaguest conception even of the *Purgatorio*. Many readers of the *Purgatorio*, to whom Dante is a prophet and teacher as well as a poet, find their high anticipations perplexed and perhaps chilled when they come to the *Paradiso*. Many of those to whom parts of the *Paradiso* itself make a direct appeal of transmuting power, on the mystic and experiential side, are baffled by the intricacies of its scholastic theology and philosophy.

But to Dante himself the movement of the whole Comedy, from the first Canto to the last, was determined and controlled by the central thought of the *Paradiso*. He spoke as one whom a vision of the ultimate goal and the inmost meaning of life was drawing, as with some spiritual magnetism or force of gravitation, to the conclusive and all-fulfilling consummation, with a trend so overmastering as to assimilate to itself all experiences of life and all records of history, and set them in living relations with each other and with itself.

In the Comedy Dante strove to set time in the light of eternity, fully convinced that so far as he could do this he would turn "folk living in this mortal life from misery and bring them to the state of bliss."

He was well aware that many who started with him on what he loves to think of as his "voyage" would be more interested in the incidents of the passage than in the "desired haven" which it sought; and he is even content that relatively few should follow his special guidance to the end. But he could at least reckon on all his serious readers so far understanding his purpose as to share with him the clear intellectual conception, if not the mystic realization, of the nature of the haven itself. Heaven and the beatific vision meant something perfectly definite and intelligible to Dante's contemporaries; and, however much or little it might be to the heart or soul, it was firmly enough held in the brain to enable them to understand how the successive portions of the Comedy were related to it, and how they took their direction and movement from it.

It is the object of the first of the two essays in this volume to help the modern reader to place himself approximately at this point of vantage; for if the study of the *Inferno* and the *Purgatorio* is often found to be a disappointingly inadequate preparation for reading and feeling the *Paradiso*, on the other hand the comprehension of the central theme of the *Paradiso*, even though it be only on its intellectual side, and though the crowning Cantica itself should never fully assert its power, will be found the best of all preparations for apprehending the deeper meaning and the deeper beauties of Dante's conception and treatment of hell and purgatory.

The second essay is concerned with kindred but far more intricate and difficult matter; for it deals no longer with the organism of the Comedy and the mutual relations of its parts, but with the relation of Dante's Minor Works to the conception and purpose of the Comedy itself. To accomplish the one task we have only to place the poet's own avowed and conscious purpose in the light of the current theological conceptions of his day; whereas to succeed in the other we must trace the sometimes devious steps that led the traveller from the beginning to the end of his journey even when he himself but dimly realised whither they were taking him. Looking back from the end to the beginning we must survey and relate to each other all the intermediate stretches of the path.

Fortunately the chronological succession of the works that directly concern our inquiry may be taken as established with an adequate approximation to general assent. The *Vita Nuova* is followed by the main body of the *Canzoni*, so far as they are not contemporary with it and immediately related to its subject matter. Then follow the *Convivio*, the *Monarchia*, and the *Commedia*. Carefully read in their order these works reveal one line at least of steady advance from the starting point to the goal. They show us the unbroken development of Dante's attitude towards Christian theology. In the *Vita Nuova* we are in an atmosphere of naïve and unquestioning devoutness, in which the teaching of the Church is taken for granted. In this phase of thought,

the religion of ideal love, can breathe an atmosphere kindred to its own. In the *Canzoni* and the *Convivio* we find (with other matter) widening intellectual interests, strengthening powers of observation and reflection, and a missionary ardour to enrich the minds and direct the ideals of starved or misled humanity. Here Dante not only remains a devout believer but is becoming an ardent and systematic student of theology. As yet, however, his interest in the divine science is stimulated chiefly by its reaction upon secular ideals. For these ideals, when reverently contemplated in the light of their analogies with the spiritual order of things, gain a depth and a consecration that bring out their own highest beauty. To refute materialistic conceptions of True Nobility is a task akin to that of S. Thomas Aquinas when he undertook to refute the Heathen. To carry the truths of philosophy out of the cloister and the schools into the busy and preoccupied world is to imitate the Divine mercy which condescends to give to the common man, by revelation, assurance not only of truths inaccessible to reason, but also of much that it is indeed within the range of the human faculties to compass, but which only a chosen few would have time or opportunity or power to secure, or even to test, for themselves. And indeed what is philosophy, either to the learned or to the simple, save the love of Wisdom? And was it not Wisdom's self that came down to earth and assumed our nature, to teach us the truth? The consecration of the Divine example then shines upon the teacher's task.

These thoughts permeate the *Convivio*. But in that work Dante's mind is still dominated by the Ethnic sages, though touched with the glow of Christian devotion. He still thinks in terms of the Aristotelian distinction between the practical or civic and the speculative or theoretical life, and he has not yet grasped its relations to the ecclesiastical and mystic distinction between the active life of good works and the contemplative life of communion with the Deity.

In the last book of the *Convivio*, however, there emerges a conception of the Roman Empire as divinely guided and inspired which must be regarded as the last and most significant of the reactions of theology upon secular ideals which we have to examine. And this implicit parallel between the temporal and the spiritual order is explicitly developed in the *Monarchia* and pervades the Comedy. In the *Monarchia* the recognition of a Divine guidance of secular forces in the history of Rome, analogous to that of spiritual forces in the history of Palestine and the Church, is already so far advanced that the exposition by Aquinas of the need of a supreme authority in matters of faith, represented by the office of the Pope, can be elaborated by Dante to support the authority of the Emperor as the supreme administrator of Roman Law. The parallelism between temporal and spiritual things is now fully worked out and systematized ; the Ethnic distinction between the practical and the theoretical intelligence falls into the background, while that between Reason

and Revelation comes to the front ; and the spiritual order having standardized and illuminated the poet's conception of the temporal order is now drawing his mind more and more directly to itself for his own sake. The *Monarchia* sets forth the whole framework and scaffolding of the Comedy so completely that it may safely be trusted as the "key" to the symbolism and the main allegory of every part of the Poem.

This clear and unbroken line of progress when once distinctly recognized can never be lost sight of or obscured ; and it leaves no room to doubt that the Comedy as we now know it could not have been conceived in its general outline and structure until Dante's mind had definitely moved away from the stage of development represented by the Convivio, and had reached the equilibrium of a fuller and firmer synthesis and a deeper spiritual insight.

But the recognition of this unbroken line of progress does not furnish us with a complete solution of the complex and entangling problems presented by the *Convivio*, from which I have provisionally disengaged it. In the *Canzoni* that lie outside the cycle of the *Vita Nuova*, and in the *Convivio*, there is a distinct movement *away* from Dante's self-dedication to the task of raising a monument to Beatrice ; and moreover there are sometimes clear and sometimes half-obliterated traces of what is openly confessed in the Comedy, namely a period in Dante's life during which he had not cared to dwell upon his

memories of Beatrice and the hopes and purposes associated with them, because his current interests and standards had seemed even at the time to be alien from such memories. In the retrospect they seemed deeply unworthy of them.

All these and other aspects of the *Convivio* have been subjected to examination in the second essay in this book; and the attempt has been made, by first disentangling and then recombining them, to arrive at a psychologically intelligible account of how that early purpose of writing of Beatrice "what ne'er was writ of woman," after seeming to fall into the background and almost into oblivion for twenty years, finds its transfigured fulfilment at last in the poem which seeks to rescue "those living in this mortal life from the state of misery and to bring them to the state of bliss."

It is almost exactly a hundred years since the serious attempt to present Dante's work from first to last as an intelligible whole was initiated by the German Dantist, Witte (then some twenty-two or twenty-three years of age), in the first of the brilliant series of essays which may be said to have dominated the Dante studies of the last century. Those who have any acquaintance with Witte's work will see that it is impossible for me to exaggerate the extent of my indirect obligation to the stimulus he gave to Dante scholarship. At the same time they will understand that his placing the composition of the *Monarchia* in the early years, before Dante's exile, led

to what I cannot but regard as a fatal misconception of the *Convivio*.

And what is worse, it consequentially led Witte and his followers to an allegorizing interpretation of the Thirtieth and Thirty-first Cantos of the *Purgatorio* which would altogether mar the directness and universality of their appeal and would persuade us that the great majority of readers are so deeply moved by them only because they misunderstand them. These mists and obfuscations of the most intensely personal utterances of the poet would be finally dispelled if the attempt here made to recover the links between the *Vita Nuova* and the Comedy were to approve itself, in the main, to students of Dante.

*** I have not wished to interrupt the reading of the essays by frequent indices, but have given continuously, at the foot of the pages, what I hope will be found sufficiently full references to enable students readily to verify or check the translations and paraphrases in the text. In the prose works the lines referred to are those of the Oxford Dante, and [in square brackets] the sections of the Florentine Testo Critico, 1921, are added.

I am indebted to the Rev. R. Travers Herford for the correct form of Rabbi Hanina's words cited on p. v, and for the reference to Talmud Babli, Taanith 7^{a}., where they are recorded.

CHILDREY, *May* 1922 P. H. W.

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PART I

THE COMEDY

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PART I

THE COMEDY

(The *Inferno* and the *Purgatorio* in the light of the *Paradiso*)

The poetic splendour of the *Inferno* breaks upon the reader as soon as he opens the first pages of the Comedy ; but it is often obscured by historical allusions, astronomical circumlocutions, and terms of mediæval science or philosophy, which darken and at times quench its light. These obstacles, however, soon begin to yield to patient study, and what threatened to choke the flame catches fire from it and in its turn flings light into every corner of the world in which Dante lived and thought.

Meanwhile, earlier or later as the case may be, the reader becomes aware of an underlying purpose and significance, seldom obtruded but always present, that gives unity and direction to the movement of the whole poem, breathing into it a vital spirit of its own and appealing for its interpretation to no other lore than such as knowledge of ourselves and observation of life can give us.

Presently, when we grow familiar with the *Purgatorio* and the *Paradiso*, the *Inferno*, in spite of its direct and arresting grip upon our imagination, reveals itself as a beginning that must be read in the light of the middle and the end if we are to understand it truly ; and we begin to feel, perhaps gropingly, for the organic relation of the parts to the

whole. The misleading suggestion will probably present itself to us, at this point, that the first Cantica of the Comedy is the foundation on which the whole structure stands, and that the way to heaven lies through hell. There is indeed a sense in which this is true, but we can never rightly grasp it till we have realized the far deeper sense in which it is false. This is the first point to which we must turn our attention.

I. THE BEATIFIC VISION

In the heaven of the *primum mobile* Dante sees a single point of intensest light, and since its spaceless glory represents God himself Beatrice tells him that "from that point all Heaven and Nature hang."[1]

It is the purpose of this essay to show how the Comedy itself, in its animating spirit and its intimate structure, "depends from that point."

In the mediæval belief both angels and men were created by the divine will to be recipients of the divine goodness; and the life of heaven consisted in the contemplation by these recipient spirits of the primal Goodness that created them. As to the difference between the angelic and the human nature there will be something to say presently (p. 26), but we must note at once that, for man,

[1] Da quel punto
depende il cielo e tutta la natura.
Paradiso xxviii: 41 *sq.*

the life of Eden as a stage was a no less essential part of the divine purpose than the life of Heaven as the goal. Further, the whole material creation, including the revolving heavens, and even time and space themselves, were designed with reference to this earthly life of man.

The *Paradiso* deals with the life of Heaven and the last six Cantos of the *Purgatorio* with the life of Eden. And these two, with all that they involve, not only " depend " directly from God, but embody the whole of the primary and essential purpose of the Creator for his creatures.

But the Fall brought with it a warping and distortion of the divine pattern, and since violent disturbances of order are to be understood only by reference to the order they have disturbed it is but natural that the most intimately characteristic features of Dante's representations alike of Hell and Purgatory should depend upon his conception of the state of unfallen man and of his heavenly destiny. The fixed and firm attachment therefore is from above and not from below, and the structure of the Comedy as a whole " depends from the *Paradiso* " rather than " rests on the *Inferno*." Unless we have formed a clear conception of what Dante meant by Heaven we shall only dimly understand what he meant by Hell and Purgatory.

There is much less that divides Dante's intellectual conception of Heaven from the received teaching of his time than there is with respect to the corresponding conceptions of hell and purgatory; and conse-

quently Dante was able to assume that his readers would start with the same presuppositions as to the ultimate goal of humanity that he himself accepted. However much deeper his realization of divine and spiritual things might be than that of the average believer, and however much the readers of the *Paradiso* might deepen their own spiritual experience and realization by studying it, yet their intellectual belief as to what constitutes the heavenly life itself would need no change. They began their reading of the Comedy, as we do not, with a precisely formulated belief as to Heaven that agreed with that of their author.

But, on the other hand, hell and purgatory had a different meaning to Dante from that which they bore to his contemporaries, and this precisely because he saw them in closer relation to heaven than they did. Hell, as a fact, he accepted (not without inward protest) from authoritative tradition; but what he read into it could only be seen in the light of heaven, and therefore could not be seen at all by the worldling, or by the damned themselves. And purgatory was not to Dante, as it was to others, a painful price paid by man for permission to enter heaven, but a blessed opportunity allowed him of bringing himself into tune with heaven. These modifications of the current conceptions were forced upon him as necessarily involved in that very conception of heaven which was accepted by his contemporaries with as little question as by himself; and it is under this light that we must consider them.

" Seeing God in his essence " is what Dante and his contemporaries meant by " heaven." Our immediate task, then, is to arrive, if we can, at an exact conception of what these words conveyed to the mind, and a sympathetic insight into the feelings with which they were associated on the lips of the first readers of the Comedy. We must be content to advance slowly, step by step, and the first and easiest step is to realize that " seeing " is to be understood very definitely and strictly in the metaphorical sense in which we say that we " see " a truth, or that we " see " a friend's thought, purpose, line of argument, or unacknowledged affections or aversions. We must check not only our thought, but our imagination, by constantly reminding ourselves that in this sense, even when we are concerned with material things, a blind man can see what he sees as well and as truly as we can, though he cannot see all the things that we see. He cannot see that one colour is deeper than another, but he can " see " that one object is harder than another ; and he can see a truth or an argument or a kind or hostile intention in exactly the same sense in which we can see them. To " see " anything, then, in our sense of the word, is to have a direct, full, and clear consciousness of it. And it is in this sense that we are to understand the expression " seeing God."

The next step is to consider the difference between thus " seeing " anything " in its essence," and seeing or knowing it only through its effect upon us. To know a thing in its essence meant so to under-

stand its inmost being as to see how all its manifestations and effects must necessarily flow from it because they are involved in it; and the question arises whether we can in this sense see, or know, anything whatever "in its essence."

Now, on this subject Dante and the teachers he followed[1] deliberately held a philosophy concerning the nature and limits of human knowledge, apart from revelation, which easily approves itself to the average common sense of mankind, though by no means unchallenged by metaphysicians. According to this philosophy our senses give us notice of a material world that actually exists outside our consciousness and independently of it, but of which we can have no kind of knowledge except in and through its effects upon our consciousness through our senses. Of what it is "in itself" or "in its essence" we can have no knowledge or even conception.

Neither can we have any knowledge of what our

[1] S. Thomas Aquinas (†1274) is the teacher from whom we can best gather the philosophical and theological system which Dante presupposes everywhere, and expressly sets forth and expounds as occasion rises. On its purely philosophical side this system is based on Aristotle's teaching—developed, however, in directions of which Aristotle knew nothing; and brought into relation with the mystic and dogmatic inheritance of the Church. And this ecclesiastical tradition, in its turn, was saturated with Platonic influences. Dante studied Aristotle at first hand, though (in common with Aquinas himself and his teacher Albertus Magnus) he read him in Latin translations only. He looks at Aristotle essentially from the point of view of Aquinas, but he is not a slavish disciple.

consciousness is "in itself," apart from its content; apart, that is, from the impressions received from the external world and the processes in our minds that they provoke. As soon as the sense images fall upon the mind its latent powers are awakened into actuality and we enjoy or fear, remember or desire, as many of the higher animals do also. But what is this mind or consciousness "in itself" before it is conscious of anything? In itself, and before it comes into action, how does the naked capacity for abstracting, generalizing, reasoning, and inferring, which is specific to man, differ from the naked capacity for receiving sense impressions and being attracted or repelled, pleased or displeased, which is shared by other animals? We cannot answer these questions, and therefore we can understand neither external things nor the organ of consciousness "in themselves." And neither can we understand the connection between our consciousness and the bodily organs through which we receive our impressions of the external world, of which they themselves are a part. We can know none of these things therefore in their essential being. God only, the Creator and first cause of all things, can so know what these things are in their inmost nature as to see how their relations to each other and reactions with each other follow from and are involved in what they are "in themselves." We can know things only by their effects, as apprehended in our conscious experiences.

But now if we take all these fundamental connections and relations as we find them, not in themselves,

but in their united and reciprocal action, not asking what mind, matter, and sense organs are in themselves or how their relations rise out of their essence, but simply examining the resultant impressions and processes or goings on in our own minds, we are on very different ground. We find, for instance, that out of the data supplied us by the senses we are capable of forming certain general conceptions, such as the ideas of "whole" and "part." We find special instances of a whole, with its parts, in the external world; but the generalized conception of "whole" or "part" as such is something in the mind or consciousness[1] itself. Moreover, we no sooner form these general conceptions of "whole" and "part" than we are compelled to admit, as a general self-evident proposition or axiom, that the whole is greater than its part: that is to say, embraces the part and something more. There are other logical and mathematical axioms that assert themselves inevitably as soon as we have formed

[1] The terms consciousness, mind, and soul are used in this essay as the convenience of the context suggests without any careful or significant distinction. Strictly, consciousness is the widest and most comprehensive term. Mind suggests a special region or aspect of consciousness. Soul suggests *to us* a conscious entity that has, or may have, an independent existence of its own; but the mediæval thinker would speak of the animal or vegetable soul with no such implication or even suggestion, using the term as the mere equivalent of "life" or "vitality." Thus for *him* to speak of the "human soul" did not in itself imply the existence of a psychic entity, though as a matter of fact he believed (if a Christian) the human soul to be such an entity.

certain elementary generalizations or abstract ideas. Then, further, we find that these axioms involve many unsuspected consequences which we may be slow to perceive, but which when once perceived assert themselves as inevitably involved in the axioms themselves, and as necessarily flowing from them. Thus the whole body of logical truth (including mathematics, that marvellous erection of specialized logic with its intense intellectual interest and its innumerable practical applications) has all been evolved in the progress of the ages out of the little stock of axioms that everyone capable of understanding their terms must inevitably accept. Any mathematical or logical conclusion that cannot be shown to be involved in the axioms is unstable and liable to challenge.

Now, of all these *processes*, so far as our own minds are capable of them, we have direct knowledge " as they are in themselves." We see how one follows upon another because it is already virtually contained in it. In a word, we can find their source and germ and can trace their movement " from inside " as a development and unfolding of their own inmost nature.

Note here that in these general or abstract conceptions our minds transcend the data of the senses that set them at work. For we can neither touch nor smell nor see a mathematical line that has no breadth. Nor can any such conception as " necessary sequence " or " truth " be the object of sense perception. Of these abstractions or conceptions in our

own minds we have direct consciousness (whether vague or precise) "as they are." But what is the relation in this matter of one mind to another? To begin with, since I have no direct access to the processes of any mind but my own, I can only receive communications from another mind, or even know that it exists, in virtue of its expressing itself through some medium that can act upon the senses.[1] Such expression I interpret on the analogy of my own inward experience. The whole process of teaching and learning in the region of pure thought consists in enabling the less developed mind to climb back through the expressions of the more developed mind to an understanding of the actual processes internal to that mind itself.

How different it would be if we had some "sense" by which we could, up to the measure of our inherent capacity, actually "see" the processes themselves of the more developed mind with the same direct consciousness with which we "see" our own! The teacher would always know exactly where the pupil's mind was and what next step would be clear to it; and the pupil would see the very process which he was invited to follow in the mind of the teacher, not

[1] We need not enter upon the question whether any approximation to such direct "thought reading" is, in fact, possible to us; for Dante and his contemporaries, with whose philosophy we are here concerned, had no doubt on the subject. They held quite firmly that so long as our souls remain in organic relation with our mortal bodies we can have no direct perception of the contents of another's mind, but must depend upon our interpretation of such indications as can reach the senses.

a confused and distorted image of it crossed by his own preconceived ideas and blurred by finding sand instead of wax in his mind to receive its impress.

But as things are, since we have no direct insight into the processes of another mind, we are in one respect worse off, but in another better, with regard to another mind than we are with regard to material objects. We are worse off, because the impress of mind upon mind can never be direct as it is in the case of the impressions made on the senses ; but we are better off, because as far as we can indirectly get at the processes of another mind we may hope, by the analogy of our own mind, to understand them from the inside and as they are " in themselves," whereas our perception of external things, however direct, can never be intimate.

We have been dealing with general ideas and the propositions that concern them : that is to say, with the purely intellectual aspect of our consciousness. But we are directly conscious of many other things than these. We have desires and impulses, pleasant and unpleasant sensations and experiences, hopes, fears, and purposes, that are not purely intellectual. At the root of all this is the fact that some things attract us when we are aware of them and rejoice or satisfy us when we possess or experience them, while others repel, terrify, or distress us. From the experience that things of very different kinds have the power of attracting us we form the general conception of attractiveness.

Now, some of the things that attract us, such as food for example, appeal to what we commonly mean by appetites; but in Italian and in late or scholastic Latin a thing is *appetibile*, or "the object of appetite," if it is anything that we "go for" for any reason or with any part of our nature. Thus, to desire and seek (*appetere*) truth is as much an "appetite" as if truth were food. If a man "hungers and thirsts after righteousness" that, too, is "appetite"; and here also we generalize and learn to recognize something that all the objects of our desire have in common and which is some form of "good." It is by a correct instinct that we call both things to eat and virtuous dispositions by the same name of "good."[1] They both have the same quality of "appetibility." To the normal mind they are all of them "things to be sought" in due time and measure. When we choose one thing in preference to another we are comparing them *sub specie boni*: that is to say, we pronounce this as more to be desired than that because it is "better." So this act of choice is an expression of appetite, but appetite that has an intellectual element in it inasmuch as it is influenced by the generalized conception of good and by the comparison of things, otherwise unlike each other, in respect of their "goodness." So the mediæval thinkers tell us that the act of choice

[1] Therefore, whether we are considering material or immaterial things we must be jealously on our guard against the exclusively ethical connotation which is apt, in so many connections, to attach itself to the word "good."

or election is the act of an "intellectual appetite." It is only when the passion or impulse on which we act is so overpowering as to obliterate the consciousness of any alternative that our action ceases to be voluntary and to obey our choice.

But we all know too well that the things that present themselves as desirable, or good, do not always turn out to be so; and therefore it is only good for us to get what we want when what we want is really good. Hence there are two branches of wisdom in this matter. The one consists in having what would now be called a true scale of values: that is to say, in recognizing what are the truly good and best objects of desire, and in what proportions, and what are the true relations of secondary and subordinate to primary and supreme objects of desire. The other consists in having sound judgement as to the means of getting the things that we desire, whatever they may be.

Returning now to the question of the nature of our knowledge or understanding of another man's mind, we may repeat that with our present powers such knowledge or understanding can never be direct, but it may be in various degrees intimate; for we understand a man's reasoning in so far as we understand his axioms and the processes (sound or fallacious) by which he deduces his conclusions from them. And we understand his actions and his feelings so far as we understand his scale of values, his physical capacities and sensations, the degree of his insight into the relation of means to ends, and the

extent to which his intelligence is clouded by his passions. Note, too, that both as to action and as to thought we may learn by observation to expect and reckon upon conduct and mental processes in another which, in the sense explained, we cannot be said to "understand," because we cannot find the key to them in our own experience or feelings. Of such we have a scientific knowledge from the outside, but no "understanding" from within.

To sum up, then, the whole course both of direct instruction and of what we call the "influence of a personality," consists in one soul being brought, by impressions made upon the senses, to an (indirect and imperfect) insight into the processes within another soul.

But how if, instead of having to rely upon inference (however certain, spontaneous, and even unconscious it may in some cases be), we really had the power, about which we so often speculate, of direct vision of another's thoughts and emotions and the whole sum of the processes in his consciousness! How if we could really "see" another soul in all its vital movements and experiences! Now, this is exactly the power which, according to the mediæval belief, the disembodied souls of the blessed will actually acquire (and retain when reunited to the glorified body of the resurrection) and which the angels enjoyed, by their very nature, from the first. Each such soul or angelic spirit can, up to the measure of its primal and inherent endowment, read

the consciousness of every other as directly as it can read its own.

But there is more than this. We have seen that we do not know or understand even our own souls "in themselves" (p. 9). If we really knew them in their essential being how could philosophers have discussed for ages whether the soul is material or immaterial in its nature, whether or not any of its functions are independent of bodily organs, whether by its nature it is mortal or immortal? But according to Dante's teachers, angels, unlike men, do actually "know themselves," and therefore by their very nature know God, not indeed in himself, but through his highest and noblest effects. For they have direct knowledge not only of themselves in their inmost essence and constitution, but of each other also. And a like knowledge of themselves, of each other, and of the angelic spirits will be conferred upon the souls of the blessed.

Let us try to realize something of what this would mean. Not only would our initiation into the *processes* of another's mind become swift and secure and be freed from all obscurities and misconceptions of expression, but there would be a complete removal of all possibility of confusion between the limitations imposed upon our own thoughts by the *constitution* of our minds and those imposed by their present *state*. There are, as we have seen, certain axioms or propositions that we cannot conceive as being other than true. But a proposition may be axiomatic to one mind which to another mind is

manifestly untrue. Thus (to borrow and elaborate an illustration from Aristotle), to the mind of a mathematically uneducated person the proposition that the side and the diagonal of a square are incommensurable conveys at first no meaning and then becomes so astonishing that it seems impossible to understand how it can possibly be true. That it *is* in some sense true can only be uncomprehendingly accepted on authority. To the mathematically educated mind, on the other hand, it would involve a flat contradiction to suppose that the two lines are commensurable. Thus, what one mind cannot conceive as being so another cannot conceive as being other than so.

And this need not be a difference of constitution between the two minds, for the one may well be capable of being brought to the fuller insight of the other. Thus Aristotle himself took it as axiomatic that if one body were twice as heavy as another it would fall through space twice as fast. But afterwards Galileo first saw that this *could not* be true and then demonstrated to the incredulous that it *was not*. And this not because his mind was differently constituted from Aristotle's, for Aristotle would have reached Galileo's position in a moment had anyone been at hand to direct his mind to certain obvious facts and principles. Thus, if we had direct access to our own souls and to other and higher souls than our own we could never fall into that "illusion of incapacity" which so often paralyzes effort and checks progress. We should never think

ourselves constitutionally incapable of learning things when all that was really wanting was to see our teacher's thought behind his words or even without words, and to be willing to try to follow it. We might indeed see in spirits of greater power than our own processes that we could not follow, but within the range of our actual capacity it would be impossible for us to cling hopelessly and helplessly to false axioms or false deductions which we were, in fact, constitutionally capable of seeing through, if once we had seen the truth in another's mind. Our minds might grow, and until they had reached the limit of their capacity they would grow; but though there would be teaching there would be no perplexed and bewildered learners and no vexed or baffled or disappointed teachers. Seeing a mind at work on a level too high for our comprehension would provoke wonder and admiration, but could never create confusion.

And the analogue of all this in matters of emotion and choice, or in the grading of values, would be equally true. "We needs must love the highest when we see it," and if we saw another's soul we should see all things under its scale of values; and so far as our souls were capable of right estimates we could not love the lower better than the higher when the higher had once been seen.

As we are now constituted every process of influencing or training of one mind by another must consist in getting the one mind, indirectly and im-

perfectly, through media and by inference, into some kind of understanding of what is in the other; and under such influencing and training we make our way to such truth of insight and feeling as we attain; but what if we could really "see" the thoughts and feelings of a Shakespeare or a Newton, and lay their insight and their scheme of values side by side with our own! Could we ever live and think on the old levels again? And in matters of right and wrong, or of noble and ignoble motive, if a word from a friend or even the thought of him or a chance-struck sentence or line in a book can often startle us into a sudden insight and a rectification of moral values, what if we could actually "see" the higher scheme that we can only feel after in semi-darkness! Surely, even though our lives under stress of passion should fail to conform themselves to the higher insight (even as they fail to conform themselves to such ideals as we have actually won through to), yet their compelling and persuasive force could never be escaped nor could we ever find refuge from them in the belief that we were constitutionally incapable of seeing and feeling what we had actually seen and felt.

So much for conceivable insight into created spirits. But what if we could "see" God himself? Should we not then see things in their absolute truth and in their absolute values? And would it not be impossible to be drawn aside from that vision of the perfect whole to any fragmentary object of bewildered and distorting

"appetite"?[1] That surely were Heaven. But may such a thing be?

A recapitulation at this point will show us at once what progress we have made and how far we still are from the goal. We can indirectly infer from outward signs the inward processes of other minds because we believe them to be analogous to those we are directly conscious of in ourselves. We can attach some meaning to the idea of having a direct perception of those processes in another mind because we actually have direct perception of things analogous to them in our own. We can perhaps in some sort imagine new powers which would enable us to know our own souls in their intimate and essential being, and if we could do that might we not be able to have a direct knowledge of other souls like our own? Nay, if there are angelic spirits whose intelligence is that of a created and limited consciousness, and is so far analogous to our own, might we not conceive it possible that we should have some direct knowledge of them too, which, in spite of their loftier and intenser insight, should be true up to the limit of our powers of comprehension?

But why have I constantly introduced the qualifi-

[1] A quella luce tal si diventa,
che volgersi da lei per altro aspetto
è impossibil che mai si consenta;
Però che il ben, ch' è del volere objetto,
tutto s' accoglie in lei; e fuor di quella
è defettivo ciò ch' è lì perfetto.
Paradiso xxxiii: 100–105.

cation " up to the measure of our inherent capacity " in expounding Dante's philosophy ? What exactly does it mean and what does it involve ? It was the firm belief both of Dante and his teachers that whereas every human soul had certain faculties (whether in realized or only in potential activity), such as the power of making comparisons and generalizations, grasping axiomatic truths, deducing consequences from them, experiencing and comparing attractions and repulsions, conceiving desires and selecting means by which to fulfil them, yet in different individuals these powers were possessed in different degrees of sensitiveness and strength. Though of the same essential quality and character in all, these powers were inherently and ultimately capable of higher development in one than in another. Thus, though an axiom might be equally obvious and certain to two minds it might be indefinitely richer in its implied content and so more fertile to one of them than to the other. And this not only by circumstance, but by inherent capacity.

So, too, if new powers should be conferred on the soul after death, such as the power of direct vision of spiritual essences, these powers also would be assigned in different degree to different individuals. And in either case, as there are limits of *degree* for the individual so there are limits of *quality* proper to the race of men, and to the nature of each angelic being, or common to all the created intelligence as such.

It is with the limitations of created intelligence

as such that we are now concerned; for all the processes and all the creatures which we have even imagined ourselves to know by direct access to their essential being lie within the limits of *created consciousness*. Of matter "in itself" we cannot even conceive ourselves as having intimate knowledge, because it is not *consciousness*; nor of God "in himself," because he is not *created*. To the supreme, the unconditioned, the self-sustained, the eternal first cause, as he exists essentially in and to himself, our own created intelligence gives us no access by any kind of analogy. To "see God" would be not to receive some new power in expansion of our human nature, but to break out beyond the bounds of "created consciousness" itself, whether human or angelic. It would make us partakers of the divine creative Life itself: for God alone can know himself.

"Can this be?" And if so, "how can it be?" and "what must it be?" To these questions I must simply try to give the answers expressly elaborated by Aquinas and everywhere assumed by Dante. My task as an expounder extends no further.

Can it be? It must be. Philosophy and natural religion, confirmed by revelation, tell us that the Creator will not thwart the essential nature of his creature. Now, the longing for conclusive blessedness and the unquenchable sense that such blessedness is not a mere dream, but an actual possibility, belong to the essential nature of man. Man therefore is destined to attain it; and nothing short of "deiformity," or likeness to God in our own inward

being, will give it. It must be God's will, therefore, that man should share his essential being.

"How" then can it be? To human or angelic nature it is, in itself, impossible to be or to become deiform, but to God all things are possible; and by impressing his very self, essentially, upon the created spirit he can so transfuse it with the "light of glory" (*lumen gloriæ*) that "in that light it can see the light." For when assimilated to the essential being of God it can, up to the measure of the initial capacity divinely bestowed, see God as he sees himself.—"Up to its measure." For the infinite must remain in infinite excess of the finite. But the assimilation within that measure may be perfect and may constitute, to that spirit, the absolute fulfilment of its longing for perfect vision and for perfect blessedness.

"What" will it be? The direct vision of perfect power, wisdom, love; of perfect goodness, truth, beauty; not as abstractions or ideals of our minds, but as the very being of God, who is Being's self.

By assimilation to the divine being and participation therein the blessed spirit sees God as he sees himself, and sees all things and all beings as God sees them: in their perfect and untarnished truth and beauty. There is no room here for accepting or rejecting. Seeing God, the spirit sees all things under God's own values, and is caught into the glory of his ineffable love and bliss. Standing thus at the fontal source of all being, the blessed spirit sees the material as well as the spiritual side of creation in its

Psalm xxxv: 10 [A.V. xxxvi: 9].

intrinsic nature, even as the Creator sees it. Time, space, and causation are no longer conditions that bind the thought and experience upon which they are imposed, but acts of the Creative Mind itself, above which that mind, with all that it has called into fellowship with itself, stands supreme. God and his elect see the universe and love it not in fragments but as a whole, not as a stream of effects which they must stem in order to reach up towards the first cause, but as an utterance flowing, as by force of its intrinsic and divine fitness and glory, from the central Consciousness itself within which they stand and by which they are compassed.

II. THE LIFE OF INNOCENCE AND THE FALL

Our next step must be to try to understand the mediæval conception of the life of man on earth as it was before the Fall, and would have remained had Adam not fallen. Dante tells us that collective humanity is not only a whole consisting of parts, but also a part of a greater whole. And this is equally true of each individual. It follows that a twofold harmony is needed if man's life is to conform in all respects to the purpose of his Creator. Not only must the varied appetites, faculties, and desires upon which man's life is built work in perfect harmony and balance with each other, so that there may be no internal warp or discord within him, but also he

Monarchia I. vii.

must duly relate this internally harmonious life of his to the greater whole of which it is a part. As to this latter harmony the scholastic philosophy and theology start from the assumption that the goodness of God, the infinite and absolute Perfection, must flow out in some form of self-expression or self-utterance in and to beings that can share the joy of conscious existence. But since a complete expression of the Infinite is impossible (except as expressed by and to itself) variety of expression must compensate, as best may be, for the inherent limitations of receptive susceptibility on the part of the created intelligences to whom the revelation is to be conveyed. So when God uttered himself in creation he called into being countless hosts of angels, all pure spirit like himself, and all endowed with direct spiritual vision enabling them to see themselves and each other in their essence, and thus to see in themselves their Creator as manifested in his highest effects. So far their own nature went, but (as we have seen) it was only by a miraculous act from outside their nature that they could be brought to and sustained in the direct "vision of God"; and Satan and the rebel angels, not brooking even an instantaneous probation, fell in their pride "unripe": that is to say, without ever reaching the consummation to which the faithful angels were instantaneously and irrevocably called. Of these immaterial beings, confirmed in bliss, every single one had his own proper vision of God—and therefore his own quality of knowledge, of love, and of joy—so distinctive as to

make him not only a different individual, but of a different species from all the rest. Yet each saw God truly as he is : in his essence, not merely in his effects.

Even this unimaginable variety of self-communication, however, did not exhaust God's self-utterance in calling conscious beings into participation of his joy. He willed further to create an order of beings who, unlike the angels, should grow through a succession of experiences and a continuous development to the full realization of their natural powers instead of reaching them at a bound in accomplished fullness ; and this order of beings was not all to be created simultaneously, as the angels were, but was to spring from a single pair and was to multiply through the ages. Moreover, the successions and limitations of their development were to be controlled by the conditions of time and space in contradistinction from the timeless and spaceless existence of pure spirit. So man was to be a material as well as a spiritual being. His soul was to be so associated with a physical body as to receive all the materials for its full development through the gates of the senses. This human soul or vital principle had, indeed, as we have already seen (p. 11), latent powers which could ultimately transcend the limits of the material organs with which it was associated and reach by abstraction to a realm of immaterial truth, though not to the direct perception of immaterial beings ; and these powers may be thought of as constituting a " mind " or " spirit " which is the highest aspect of the human " life " or " soul,"

and which differentiates it from the life or soul of the plants and lower animals. But the matter on which these higher powers were to exercise themselves, and above which they were to rise, must all be supplied by the senses. It was from sense data that all else must be developed.

Adam himself received his natural powers and his full stores of knowledge instantaneously at his creation ; but this was a personal gift, not a part of the human nature he was to transmit to his posterity. Moreover, though he received his knowledge miraculously it was natural, not miraculous, knowledge that he received : just as in the Gospel though the man born blind received his sight miraculously it was natural sight that he so received.

We must not, however, judge of human nature as it was created in Eden altogether from human nature even at its best and inmost as we know it now. Adam had, and his descendants would have had, not only (as we shall see) a more harmonious nature, but quicker spiritual perceptions and a more direct knowledge both of self, of fellow-man, and of God (though not in his essence) than we can now have on earth. Had Adam not fallen the normal education and development of man from infancy to maturity would have had that sweet and frictionless movement, without wavering or error in its progress, that we have imagined as flowing from a power of direct vision of the processes of another mind (p. 12). Moreover, man would normally have inherited in the earthly life certain revealed truths inaccessible

to the human faculties even in their unfallen state; and then, after the fullest fruition of the perfect earthly life, man, without the death of the body or the provisional isolation of the soul, would have passed from the earthly to the heavenly life. His soul transmuted by the "light of glory" and his body transformed into a perfect and unresisting instrument of his soul, he would have "seen God," seen the universe as God sees it, and entered the eternal life.

Man, then, has his own proper place in the divine scheme, and the fall of the angels, even if it was the occasion, was not the deepest cause or reason of his creation, for he was an integral part of the divine self-utterance, which would not have been complete without him. The whole order of the material creation exists for the sake of man, and for his sake only. Its function is threefold: to sustain his body, to educate and develop his spirit, and to give him the material for that moulding and artistic self-utterance which is his nearest analogue to the divine privilege of creation.

Now that we see how far the whole scheme of God's self-revelation extends beyond humanity we can understand more clearly what is meant by the distinction between the inward order of man's powers and appetites among themselves and his conformity to the greater order of which his whole being is in its turn a part.

Now, since man, even in his first perfection, could not grasp the whole purpose of God, there was this difference between his ordering of his life in itself

and his ordering of it with reference to the whole creative plan, namely, that whereas all the elements of the one order were within the range of his own direct perception he had to take those of the other on trust. So when God made Adam and Eve and set them in Eden they realized the perfect balance of their powers, as applied to the totality of their own fruition of life; but their relation to God's wider plan was beyond their ken, and with respect to this conformity a command must take the place of the spontaneous following of unerring impulse.

Dante's own account of the spontaneous internal harmony of the life of unfallen man is placed by him on the lips of Virgil when the pilgrims have actually reached the Garden of Eden, or Earthly Paradise, itself, at the summit of the Purgatorial Mount in the southern hemisphere. "Thy will," he says to Dante, "is free, upright, and sound. It were a fault not to act according to its prompting."[1] This is the state described by Wordsworth:

> When love is an unerring light
> And joy its own security.

Aquinas gives a more elaborate and analytical account of this primal state of man, but it is in complete accord with the utterances of the poets. He tells us that Adam and Eve had all the natural appetites and desires both of the senses and of the mind, and that

[1] Libero, dritto e sano è tuo arbitrio,
e fallo fora non fare a suo senno.
Purgatorio xxvii: 140 *sq.*

the fineness of their spiritual and material perceptions made their enjoyment far keener than ours can be, but that all impulses were so controlled by reason as never to press for any gratification which would disturb the full harmony and balance of their being. In this description we must not be misled by the associations of the word "reason," for with the Schoolmen it does not stand merely for the cold ratiocinative faculty as opposed to emotion. Here again Wordsworth comes to our aid, with his phrase :

> Yea, all the adamantine holds of truth
> By reason built, or passion, which itself
> Is highest reason in a soul sublime.

We are to imagine the appetites, then, not as controlled by something outside themselves that restrains them, so much as inspired by an inward sense of the harmony in which, and in which alone, each finds its full self-realization.

So Adam and Eve were incapable by their very constitution of sinning against their own higher nature, considered in itself, or of allowing any impulse to demand independent play in defiance of the rest. It was only in the collective rhythm of all that each could find full scope for the combined self-abandonment and self-expression which is its life and fulfilment. When our first parents desired to eat of the forbidden fruit that very desire is the proof that what they sought was neither evil in itself nor intrinsically evil for them. But to desire it now and thus was a breach of that subordination of their

life in its fullness to the total order to which they were bidden to adjust themselves by obedience and not by sight. It was because Adam, tempted by Eve, could not rest content under the provisional veiling of this wider purpose from human sight that man fell. Had man been obedient this larger relation in which he stood would have been revealed to him in due course, for it was good for him to have it, though not to have it thus and now.

The punishment was in exact accord with the offence. As man had refused to seek the fulfilment of his desire in due subordination to the whole of which he was a part, so now his several passions, impulses, and desires imitated his own insubordination and no longer conspired to make perfect the whole of which they were parts, but each asserted itself in reckless isolation, and destructively invaded that harmony which it had before supported. Thus reason (the perception of the true harmonies of human nature) was no more the concordant and spontaneous self-weaving of the varied impulses and faculties of man into the pattern that gave each its full interpretation and glory ; for reason had now to hold a precarious and tottering seat above a host of seething and rebellious passions and desires that recognized neither its authority nor each other's rights. Man still retained so much of the divine light as to see dimly that there must be some conclusive and all-embracing bliss behind and beyond these blind and mutually-destructive, or even self-destructive, pretenders to the throne, no one of which

kept, or could keep, its promises. But though the love of beauty, of goodness, and of truth were still innate to man, yet every gleam of random and partial good might henceforth claim to direct his steps, and the very innocence of the young soul, instead of being its guarantee of safety, might betray it to its corruption.[1]

Such, then, is the state of fallen man, and such was his original nature and destiny. The whole history of man since the Fall is the history, on the one hand, of human aberration, and, on the other, of the means of escape and recovery vouchsafed by the divine mercy. Not only were the life and death upon earth of the Incarnate Word and the healing power of the Church and her administrations means and channels of this grace, but so, too, were the civil ordinances and studies that regulate the mundane affairs, relations, thoughts, and imaginings of men; for they, too, though on a lower plane, are a part of the divine provision for the rescue of fallen humanity. Secular as well as sacred learning has its sanction as a means of "repairing the ravage of the Fall."

[1] L' anima simplicetta, che sa nulla,
salvo che, mossa da lieto fattore,
volentier torna a ciò che la trastulla,

Di picciol bene in pria sente sapore;
quivi s' inganna, e dietro ad essa corre,
se guida o fren non torce suo amore.
Purgatorio xvi: 88 *sqq.*

III. HELL

And now at length we have reached a point at which we can trace the precise bearing of these fundamental beliefs in Dante's mind upon his treatment of hell and purgatory in the Comedy. His essential or positive theme is found in his delineations of the Earthly Paradise and Heaven, for it is here that the true nature of human life and the true destiny of man are portrayed. But in order to regain the lost position from which the realization of this true life and destiny is possible we must first understand the nature of our aberrations, and in the second place must not only turn away from them but must so reverse and cancel them that it shall be as though they had never been. Only when we have unlived our evil lives shall we be able to enter upon our true life with no uncancelled record of perversity to mar its purity.

The first step is to realize what we have fallen to. The second step is to cancel the fall by an ascent. Hell is the disordered life into which we have fallen. Purgatory is the cancelling penitence by which we regain the estate from which we have lapsed.

Dante's vision of Hell, therefore, is not so much a warning or a threat as to the consequence of sin as a revelation of its inmost nature; and to reveal the true nature of sin is to reveal the true state of fallen and sinful man. As a presentation of an awful fate

that will catch the impenitent sinner hereafter Dante's *Inferno* must rank with other descriptions of hell. As a revelation of what the evil choice is in itself, wherever and whenever made, here or hereafter, it stands alone.

And in like manner Dante's *Purgatorio* reveals not the painful condition on compliance with which heaven is offered to the repentant sinner, but a blessed opportunity of cancelling from within his own evil past. The man who sees where his choice has so identified him with things evil, and so alienated him from things good, that his own record would make a discord with heaven in his soul, is now allowed to build up for himself a new record of passionate self-identification with good which shall utterly annul the record of his former self-surrender to evil and shall construct a record through which "the stream of memory can flow unstained."[1]

In other words, Dante's *Inferno* is a revelation of the falseness of the values by which we live when we sin. And his *Purgatorio* tells how a new life, lived in tune with a new sense of values, may make our whole consciousness, not only our aspirations and desires, harmonious with the experiences of Eden and of Heaven.

But here (to borrow a technical term from Dante's

[1] Se tosto grazia risolva le schiume
di vostra conscienza, sì che chiaro
per essa scenda della mente il fiume.
Purgatorio xiii : 88 *sqq.*

vocabulary) we must be careful to "distinguish." On its own denizens hell has no remedial effect whatever, for it brings no revelation to them. It is the place in which "there is no returning to a right state of will,"[1] and to say that there is no possibility of repentance in Hell is to say that there can be no changed sense of values, and so no revelation of the true meaning of sin to those who are there. So far Dante was in close accord with the received teaching of his time, and, indeed, with the professed creed of the vast majority of Christians in almost every age. Hell, to Dante as to others, was eternal—not, indeed, in the primary sense of being altogether out of relation to time, without beginning or end, and without any conscious successions, but in the secondary sense of "ever-enduring" and "not subject to essential change." Hell therefore is the place of impenitent sin, in which the sinners, though raging against their accomplices, accusing their ill-luck, or cursing God, their parents, and their kin—

> The human race, the seed from which they grew,
> The hour and place they were begotten in[2]—
>
> (MUSGRAVE)

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[1] U' non si riede
giammai a buon voler.
Paradiso XX: 106 *sq.*

[2] Bestemmiavano Iddio e lor parenti,
l' umana specie, il luogo, il tempo e il seme
di lor semenza e di lor nascimenti.
Inferno iii: 103 *sqq.*

yet never essentially change their ideals. However well they see the folly of what they *did*, they no more feel the vileness or vanity of what they *aimed at* than they did on earth. But the very consistency and force with which Dante holds this belief transforms his vision of Hell into a revelation of the nature of the evil choice itself and of the state of mind that it expresses. And it is this that distinguishes, from the moral and spiritual point of view, Dante's descriptions from those, for instance, of Aquinas or of Bunyan. While they in their delineations of Hell exhaust their genius in the attempt to impress upon us the frightful consequences we shall incur by sin, Dante reveals to us the inherent evilness of the evil choice itself, and turns not only our deliberate will, but our affections and our very passions clean away from it.

The manner in which Dante accomplishes his purpose can be brought under no formula. It is true, in general, to say that in reading the *Inferno* we realize how the man who makes an evil choice has simply to have rope enough, and to get, without qualification or relief, exactly what he seeks, in order therein and thereby to be utterly damned. Thus we see the misers rolling huge stones with ceaseless strain and toil, but accomplishing nothing, and getting nowhere, for ever and ever. But this is just what the miser is doing now. He is courting toil and weariness and depriving himself of all their fruits. To do this always and only is his constant endeavour, and to succeed in doing it is Hell. Or we may listen to the

confession of the sullen souls sunken in the mire of the river Styx :

> Sullen we were
> Once in the sweet air where the Sun makes glee,
> And sluggish vapours then within us bare ;
> Now in these bitter dregs sullen are we ! [1]
>
> (MUSGRAVE.)

This is what sulking is. If we choose by a deliberate exercise of will to shut out the sunshine and air of converse with those around us, and to nurse a vengeful sense of grievance in the sodden blackness of our minds, and if we are strong enough to persist and to succeed, then we have achieved—Hell.

The attempt has sometimes been made to work out this idea, and this alone, through every circle and into every detail. But this is to reduce the free play of Dante's splendid and appalling imagination to the artificiality of an ingenious but frigid allegory ; and, as a fact, his method varies. Sometimes the punishment of the sin is represented under the more obvious and familiar type of the sinner receiving the same measure which he had himself meted. Thus, the sowers of schism, who have dissevered those who belong to each other and who must ever yearn for reunion, are themselves cleft and mangled—to reunite and be cleft again—by the scimitar of a fiend. In other cases the form

[1] Tristi fummo
nell' aer dolce che dal sol s' allegra,
portando dentro accidioso fummo :
Or ci attristiam nella belletta negra.

Inferno vii : 121 *sqq.*

of punishment is, in the first instance at least, suggested, for example, by a current etymology that connected the word "hypocrite" with the Greek word for "gold," or by the scriptural association of the punishment of unnatural vice with the fiery rain that fell upon the Cities of the Plain. But whencesoever Dante derives his materials and whatever the particular relation between sin and punishment into which he works them, the whole atmospheric impression is uniform and is irresistible. Every reader who is not paralyzed by mere horrors, or carried away by isolated splendours of poetry, feels, vaguely perhaps at first, but with inevitable cumulative effect as he reads on and as he reads again, that a great seer is unfolding to him the Vision of Sin, and this as the first step in his task of striving "to rescue those who are yet living from the state of misery and lead them to the state of bliss."

In his dogmatic conception of hell, then, as a place of eternal and hopeless misery Dante stands where his contemporaries stood, but under this aspect he does not make the least attempt to explain it, or bring it into relation with our human sense of justice. He simply accepts it as a part of the divine scheme. It wakes pity and horror in the poet's own heart. The enlightened eyes of Beatrice seeing it as God sees it can look upon it unmoved.[1] But it is in

Epistola ad Kanem Grandem (15): 268 *sqq.* [39].

[1] Io son fatto da Dio, sua mercè, tale,
che la vostra miseria non mi tange.
Inferno ii: 91 *sq.*

the strength of faith, not of sight, that Dante calls it the work of "the Divine Power, the Supreme Wisdom, and the Primal Love." He cannot look upon it without being caught by swirls of uncontrollable anguish or having to wrestle with a passionate inward protest.

It is by thus abstaining from all attempts to explain Hell, or to "justify the ways of God" in creating it, that Dante gives it the impersonality which alone makes it tolerable. It fixes the reader's mind upon Hell not as a material fact (which however it scared could hardly convert or enlighten him), but as a symbol of impenitent sin—a symbol which can never lose its significance or its redeeming power so long as men are capable of erring and of recognizing that they have erred.

It remains, in this connection, to note that it was in relation to the dogma of an eternal Hell that Dante's faith found its hardest and perhaps its only trial. That a Virgil or an Aristotle, for no defect in their own lives or conduct, and for no neglected opportunity that had ever been presented to them, should be eternally barred from conclusive bliss, and should be condemned for ever to live in longing that knew no hope, appeared so cruelly unjust that we feel the strain upon his faith almost reaching the breaking-point. The thought of Virgil's exile gives to Dante's portraiture of him a pathos that has no parallel in literature; and the "thirst of many years" with which it parched his soul, though it prompted one of the sublimest songs of faith ever

uttered by man, was carried back from heaven to earth unslaked, however soothed.

The hell of Dante's creed, then, is an unexplained and unintelligible place of torture; but the Hell of his *vision* is the revelation of the nature of impenitent sin. And it follows, on either count, that the vision of Hell vouchsafed to the pilgrims can never be shared by the Denizens of hell itself; for sin, so long as it is impenitent, cannot see itself as it is. The message that the souls in hell have for Dante, and through him for us, they can never receive themselves. Trajan, it is true, had been in hell, and at the prayer of Gregory had been released from bondage, so that Dante saw his soul in the heaven of the just. But even he had not repented, or rather had not come to the right view of truth, in hell, but had been restored miraculously to the earthly life in order that he might be capable of the enlightenment which it was unthinkable that he should receive in hell.

It is possible to initiate on earth the process which, continued in Purgatory, shall lead to the Terrestrial Paradise and ultimately to Heaven. But it is not possible for that process to be initiated in hell. Hence there is an absolute and final discontinuity between hell and purgatory, objectively and for their denizens. The departing soul takes its journey either to the bank of Acheron to find its eternal place in hell, or else to the mouth of Tiber to gain the shore of the purifying mount, the Garden of

Paradiso xix, xx.

Eden, and then Heaven, in its continuous progress towards its eternal place of fruition in God. But these are alternatives, and there is no passing through Hell to Purgatory.

Nevertheless, so completely does Dante's vision dominate his dogma in the resultant impression left on the reader's mind that nothing is more common than to find the subjective continuity of the pilgrim's experience translated into terms of an objective continuity of function in the regions he traverses. Hence, such assertions as that, " according to Dante, Hell is the first step towards Heaven." How entirely this contradicts Dante's conception we have clearly seen, for Hell is the evil choice stereotyped and irrevocable. It is a false scheme of values arrested, ingrained, and become indelible. But whereas the damned for ever *see* sin as it is not, they *reveal* it as it is, and therefore the *vision* of Hell is indeed what Hell itself is not—the first step to Heaven. To have " seen " what the fallen state is fills us with *heimweh* for the Paradise we have lost and sets our will to regain it.

IV. PURGATORY AND THE RECOVERED EDEN

Dante uniformly represents his vision as the record of an actual experience which had been granted to him by a miraculous intervention wholly outside the ordinary course of nature. He was called to this experience by the divine mercy as the sole means of

breaking down the obduracy of his own sinful heart which had resisted even the exceptional means of grace already vouchsafed to him. But the facts which he represents as brought home to him with overwhelming force and directness by miraculous means, are accessible enough to all of us on earth if we would but see them. Dante saw the evil choice as it really is because he saw it stripped of all disguise, freed from all admixture, and robbed of the glamour with which false imaginations and associations invest it. But we, too, may see it as it is if we will but open our eyes. Nor does Dante conceive that God has left us, even in our fallen state, altogether without succour. Reason, it is true, was weakened and confused by the Fall, and the passions now no longer spontaneously acknowledge her sway. But it is still her function to emancipate all our natural impulses and appetites, both of sense and soul, from the impotence and thwartings of isolated self-assertion and to bring them back to the freedom and harmony of mutual support and order. Under her control the earthly life, even of fallen man, may approximate ever more closely to the life of Eden. And so even as the divine grace condescended to prepare through long ages the redemptive plan which, in its last great act on the Mount of Calvary, should cancel the " long prohibition " that had barred man out of his forfeited heaven, so, too, by a contemporaneous evolution on the secular side this same grace had elaborated a system for the regulation of the affairs

Purgatorio xxx : 133–138.

of this world which should enable man in large measure to " repair the ravage of the Fall " on its temporal and earthly side.

Nothing is more essential for the right understanding of Dante than a clear conception of this twofold work of restoration as he conceives it. In Eden Reason spontaneously secured man in the enjoyment of terrestrial felicity, and Revelation would have led him, in due course, first to a knowledge of the conditions of celestial bliss and then to its fruition. Nor did either Reason or Revelation abdicate its function at the Fall. It is still Reason's business to lead man to a life as of Eden ; and that is why Virgil is Dante's guide not only in Hell, but right up into the very Garden of Eden itself at the summit of the Mount of Purgatory. And it is still the function of Revelation to declare to man the nature of heavenly bliss and to direct him to its attainment. Reason has spoken through the great philosophers and poets, and has organized her counsels for the regulation of social life in that august instrument of administrative justice the Roman Law, called by Dante *scritta ragione*—" Reason codified." And in like manner Revelation has been embodied in the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments.

Nor did the divinely granted succour to fallen man arrest itself here : for Scripture and Roman Law were each of them committed to the authorized guardianship and interpretative administration of a great institution which had been elaborated *pari passu* with them ; the institutions, namely, of the

Empire and the Church, the " spouse and secretary of God " who " cannot lie."

It is with the former of these two institutions that we are immediately concerned. Had the Empire performed its duties, and had Roman Law been duly enforced, there would have been a standing vindication of justice upon earth and a perpetual setting forth of the true scheme of moral values. Greed, the greatest foe of justice, would have been held in check; with justice assured peace would have been firmly established; in relations of mutual helpfulness the nations of the earth would have supplemented and aided each the other's progress, and the goal of human civilization would have been reached in a life of earthly felicity reflecting, at least, though not fully realizing, the original design of the Creator for the earthly stage of man's existence. But the Empire, internally false to its mission and externally thwarted by the secular usurpations of the Church, had failed to give the needed guidance and support to frail and hesitating human virtue, and man had gone farther and farther astray for lack of true leaders. Nevertheless, in the heart of man the light of Reason still shone, though with dimmed lustre, and was still shed abroad by the writings of poets and philosophers, while the protest of the Roman Law against every form of injustice still stood.

Convivio II. vi: 33 *sq.* [v: 5], iv: 32 *sq.* [iii: 10]. *Cf.* IV. xv: 49 *sq.* [5].

Monarchia I. iii *sqq.*, III. xvi, and *passim*. *Purgatorio* xvi: 97 *sqq.*, xxxii: 94 *sqq.*, and many other passages in the Comedy and elsewhere.

Men therefore were not without means of ethical grace, and only the most hardened could fail to see, at least in their better moments, the true nature of good and evil and to turn from the evil that had stained their own lives. Such repentance when deep and sincere would not be a mere intellectual perception, however vivid, of the right values and of the reasonableness of a life regulated by them. It would be a definite act of the will and of the affections, going out in passionate love to the virtues erst neglected, and actively repelling and abominating the evil once embraced. To the truly penitent an evil choice is not something that, though still attractive, must be resisted. For true repentance is a turning away of the whole heart and the whole will and inclination from evil ways. To the truly penitent such ways have become hateful.

Yet here on earth this true repentance may be short-lived. It is, indeed, easy to imagine one who has practised, let us say, wanton cruelty to man or beast seeing at a flash the true nature of his action and by a definitive revulsion of feeling becoming incapable of ever again committing such acts or taking pleasure in them. Such a one would be seized by an almost intolerable sense of compunction and by a longing to do and to bear in the cause of mercy and tenderness, and to cancel the self-identification with a hateful thing which stained the record of his life. Such a repentance, in the case supposed, would be conclusive and final. But it is only too familiar to human experience that a repentance equally pas-

sionate and sincere and perhaps equally secure of its own permanence nevertheless may break down under stress of temptation. The thing that had become hateful has resumed its power of attraction, and the false values again blur the true. Thus, on earth the glimpses of the Hell of evil choice and will, conclusive as they seem to us at the time, may yet pass away. But as long as true penitence lasts it is no determination to abandon a course that still attracts (for this at best is only a *desire* to repent, and not repentance), but an actual "conversion," a "turning round" of our affections themselves.

On earth, then, impulses to good and evil may chase each other across our hearts, and even whilst we are definitely overcoming our evil ways we may constantly have to fortify our will against unregenerate impulses that refuse to be silenced even when controlled. But according to Dante's view this is not so either in Hell or in Purgatory. For in the one realm penitence is impossible and in the other it has been, so to say, "lock-stitched" and is irreversible.

Dante believed that genuine and passionate conversion or repentance is in any case necessary to salvation. If a man is not so repentant at the moment of death his way lies to Acheron, and repentance is for ever impossible. But if, at that moment of death, not only his aspirations and resolves but his affections and impulses are directed aright, then there is no going back for him, and his dispositions, secure from all change or slackening, become irrevocable as he passes into the world of spirits.

When Dante had seen Hell he felt that whatever weakness or fluctuation there might still be in his life the vision itself could never wax dim. Henceforth he would always know sin for what it was; and when the decisive moment came the rush of his affections would inevitably sweep him towards that which is good; just as when we are most chilled or even embittered in our feelings towards those we love, we know in our heart that if, at that instant, our whole relation to them were collectively and conclusively at stake our trivial sense of alienation would be utterly consumed in the flame of all-embracing love; and this very knowledge makes us ashamed of the momentary disproportions which our distorted vision has imposed upon the things that matter and the things that do not. It was to secure men to this condition of underlying certainty of affection, even amid the rise and fall of random impulses not yet under full control, that Dante delivered his message to "remove those living in this life from the state of misery and bring them to the state of bliss." Thus, if the *Inferno* is a study of unrepentant sin, the *Purgatorio* is a study of the state of true penitence wherever and whenever it may exist.

It was a part of the general belief and tradition of Dante's day that though the act of repentance followed by confession and absolution obliterates the guilt of sin, yet unperformed penances and the perpetual accretion, at the very least, of venial sin will in all cases, save that of saints and martyrs, leave a surplus to be expiated in dire pain of the senses after

death. Here as elsewhere we read Dante's mind in his distribution of stresses more than in the articles of his creed. He accepted indeed the penal and expiatory function of Purgatory, but his stress is laid on a conception of it that the official representatives of the Church overlooked if they did not deny. For to him not even the most efficacious sacrament, not the atoning death on the cross, not even the sense of the divine forgiveness can supersede the need of the self-expression of penitence following on the act of repentance: and it is to this essential quality of penitence that he directs our minds. For he regards the pains of the souls in Purgatory not as a price they have to pay for entry into Heaven, but as a medium through which they can vitally utter their repudiation of their own past and assert their loyalty to the things they had once denied and betrayed. Thus, the pains of Purgatory are not endured, but are welcomed and embraced as a solace and support which relieves the else intolerable sense of discord in the soul between the things it loves and the things it has actively stood for. So whether the avaricious, for example, who had turned away from the stars of heaven and fixed their gaze upon the dust of earth, in sordid preference for low and cramping aims, still lie prone and bound, testifying to their unworthiness to look upon the heaven they love or away from the earth that bears witness against them; or whether the gluttons—so famished that their sunken eye-sockets are "like

Purgatorio xxvi: 13–15, xxiii: 70–75, 85 *sq.*, xxi: 64–66.

rings from which the jewel has been thrust out "— who pass by the delicious fruit-trees feeling and mastering the tug, in its full organic strength, of that appetite which in its mere languor of self-cultivation had once enslaved them ; in every case the sufferings are no mere passive endurance. In every case they are an active self-expression, a reversing and unliving of the past life, a countering of its evil record; a thing positive, not negative, a self-identification with the values of Eden; an act, not a mere acquiescence, of the will.

The souls of the repentant do indeed desire so to complete their repudiation of the past that it shall once for all be cast off and done with, so that they shall no longer feel that it belongs to them or they in any sense to it. Then they will be able to enter the life of Innocence in the Garden of Eden without feeling that they themselves make a discord with it and are a blot upon its beauty and its sweetness. When that time comes the spontaneous impulse to rise into the unreproved fruition of their inheritance of delight will "surprise" them, and at the same moment the whole mountain will shake with a cry of sympathetic triumph rising from the souls that still have to dree their weird. But, until that moment comes for it, each soul flings itself upon its pain, not so much because it is incidentally painful as because it is essentially expressive of its present passion.

To sum up, then, the *Inferno* shows us what the

Purgatorio xviii : 115–117, xx : 127–138, with xxi : 58–66. *Cf.* xix : 139–141.

loss of Eden means. To have seen Hell is to hate evil and to turn with strong rebound to the blurred and desecrated ideals of that better self which still preserves the impress of the life of Innocence. To go through Purgatory is to undo the past, and, at last, to resolve the discord between what we love and what we have been ; so the *Purgatorio* teaches us that Eden may be and must be regained, and shows us the way. But there is yet another step. On the terraces of purgation on the Mount the souls contemplate evil as the foul thing they have embraced and good as the loveliness they have cast away. Must not the very passion of concentrated repudiation stamp the memory, at any rate, of evil, all the more indelibly upon the consciousness ? Perhaps. But it is not so in Eden itself. Actually to live the life of Innocence, with the sense of utterly belonging to it, makes past evil so unreal and unbelievable that it is as though it had not been. It has no hold upon mind or memory. And so Dante tells us of the stream of Lethe that springs, not on the purgatorial sides of the Mount, but in the Garden of Eden itself. When he has drunk of that stream and stands unreproved by Beatrice's side the whole history of his aberrations and his recovery drops clean out of his mind. His present innocence links itself directly to the innocence of those early days when Beatrice still led his willing feet " upon the true path," and he is conscious of no alien wanderings ever having intervened. To have seen Hell, to have gone through Purgatory, to have lived the life

of Innocence and drunk the waters of Lethe, is to stand where our first parents stood—or would have stood had they persevered under their first trial—with young-eyed wonder and delight, in a world whose beauty cannot ensnare nor its loves betray.

EPILOGUE

A right understanding of the relation of Purgatory to the Earthly Paradise and of the Earthly Paradise to Heaven as Dante conceived them will bring out the profound significance of a special feature in his representation of the site of purgatory that everyone has noticed but not everyone has understood. He departs from the uniform assumption of his contemporaries that purgatory lay in the subterranean purlieus of hell; and he locates it on the sides of a great mountain at the antipodes of Jerusalem. The full meaning of this will be grasped when we note that, according to Dante, this mountain originally rose, *not* as a place of purgation, but as what we may call the pedestal of the Garden of Eden. It was only when man had fallen from his high estate and must toilsomely regain what had originally been his birthright that he had to "climb" that mount to the summit of which he was by rights native. To Dante it was an inevitable dictate of symbolical logic that the process of vital recovery of the state of Innocence should be worked out in process of the physical ascent to the actual Eden.

And note, above all, that to Dante Eden is still

the appointed vestibule of Heaven. He had no conception of the ideal earthly life being a non-essential part of the experience of man that had been permanently lost by the Fall. The earthly life existed of its own right, and not only as a prelude to the heavenly life. He would have endorsed with all his heart the opinion of Aquinas previously expounded (p. 27), that the human experience of a mind developing under the stimulus of the senses and upbuilding itself on the materials supplied by them—in perfect balance and spontaneous symmetry, abandoning itself with entire confidence to the guidance of its own impulses and never betrayed by them—was needed not only for the replacing of the fallen angels, and not only for the training of man for Heaven, but also on its own account as a phase of the creative joy of God and the perfection of the universe. The belief that some approach to this ideal life on earth was still possible inspired Dante with his profound reverence for all the instruments of good government and for every artistic expression of beauty ; and it fed that native optimism as to the future possibilities of the human race which is constantly cropping up through the surface of his official pessimism and triumphing over the darkness of his personal experience. Yet the life we now live could at best render but an imperfect and distorted image of the life of Eden, as it stood at the beginning in the creative plan. And to Dante therefore it was a spiritual necessity to think of the ideal state of Eden itself being actually experienced on this *earth*, if not

in this *life*; that there might be no hiatus or defect in the full realization of the earthly and the heavenly joy of the elect.

One more subject must be touched upon. The purpose of this essay was to set forth the essential thought of Heaven to which the thought of Hell and of Purgatory is related in Dante's mind. To enter upon his actual treatment of the transcendent theme of Heaven is beyond its scope. But there is one point at which the *Paradiso* is so linked to the representation of the Terrestrial Paradise that a few supplementary words must be added to what can be read in the *Purgatorio*. We have seen that Dante, when he has drunk of Lethe, forgets all that intervened since he strayed from the ideals associated with Beatrice, so that not only all the beautiful companionship and care of Virgil, but the pleadings with him, "in dream and otherwise," of Beatrice herself, and her journey to hell to secure Virgil's guidance for him, have passed out of his mind because the meaning and the occasion of them have become unrealizable to him inasmuch as they rested on errors of which there is now no record or trace in his mind.

But surely these things in themselves were good, though the occasion that called them forth was evil, and, as good, they will enter into the consciousness of his soul in heaven though they have vanished from it on earth. Yes, for there is another stream besides Lethe in the Earthly Paradise. It is the stream

Purgatorio xxx: 133–141.

of Eunoë, or fair memory; and a little after Dante has drunk of Lethe he drinks of Eunoë also. To live the life of Innocence not only detaches the soul from all sense of fellowship with evil, but quickens in it all memories of good and brings them back from oblivion with all their deep significance revealed. This is the last and most perfect gift of the recovered Eden to Dante's pilgrim soul and to all others who pass that way. And so we find that the once sinful souls that Dante meets in heaven have indeed recovered the memory of their sins, but remember them not with any lingering sense that they belong to them, but only as the occasions that prompted the redeeming grace that now has undisputed sway in their triumphant sense of fruition. Rejoicing in the perfect will of God, and finding therein their peace, they find their own forgiveness there and they forgive themselves.

Paradiso ix: 34–36, 103–108.

PART II

THE MINOR WORKS

In honorem

KAROLI WITTE

PART II

THE MINOR WORKS

(In the light of the Comedy)

Dante's life, and the record of it contained in his works, culminate in the Comedy; and just as the earlier parts of the Comedy reveal their full meaning only when related to the Earthly Paradise and to Heaven, so Dante's Minor Works, in their turn, only acquire their true significance when we regard them as the preparation for the Comedy, foreshadowing it half-consciously, or unconsciously leading up to it. I assume a general acquaintance with these Minor Works themselves, especially the *Vita Nuova*, the *Canzoni* or Odes, the *Convivio*, and the *Monarchia*; and, taking them severally, I shall first offer some comments and reflections upon them on their own merits, and then try in each case to relate them to their final outcome in the Comedy. We must begin, of course, with the *Vita Nuova*.

I. THE "VITA NUOVA"

When Dante, in his eighteenth year, wrote the first poem that we possess from him, or that he himself acknowledges, there was nothing to distinguish his general conception of Italian poetry from that of his fellow-citizens. Other young Florentines of birth and position were writing love-poems in the vernacular; and their vocabulary, verse-forms, and traditional images had already been highly elaborated,

and, in the artistic sense of the term, conventionalized. The personification of Love, the potency of the loved one's salutation, the regenerative influence of enamourment, conferring, as it were, a patent of nobility on the true lover and raising the whole tone of his life, are common form with this group of poets. But in no other field had the Tuscan vernacular received so high a degree of elaboration as a literary instrument. Italian was indeed already used in Italy for many purposes of instruction, but the Tuscan tradition confined its artistic scope to love-lyrics only; and Dante and his elder friend Guido Cavalcanti evidently thought it would be a startling impropriety to cultivate in the vulgar tongue any other branch of literature proper. Dante finds the justification of withdrawing this one branch of literature from the domain of Latin and transferring it to the common speech, in the necessity of writing love-poetry in a language which could be generally understood and even critically appreciated, by women; and it would appear that the Florentine ladies, at any rate, were in fact keenly interested in this nascent poetry and that the references to their incisive judgements and appreciations which we meet in extant poems or in the traditions that surround them were far from being mere formal compliments.

Thus, when Dante felt the "new life" of the higher sensibilities and perceptions awakened in him by his early meeting with Beatrice; when this life was nurtured and matured by his bashful contemplation of the opening beauty of soul that revealed

itself in her gracious ways; when he was thrilled by a casual interchange of civilities or deeply troubled by real or fancied slights; and, finally, when he reached the unassailable security of a devotion that demanded neither graceful acknowledgement nor even bare comprehension in return, he inevitably became Beatrice's poet; and then, after death had removed her visible presence and other interests or passions began to dispute the unique place she had occupied in his heart, he regarded them, for a time, as temptations to take up life on a lower plane instead of allowing it to be further refined and ennobled by yet deeper devotion to his now glorified lady. At the end of his own idealized record, in which he weaves selected poems, on a ground of a continuous prose narrative, into the ethereal texture known as the *Vita Nuova*, he closes on the note suggested by a wondrous vision which rebaptized his early manhood in the waters that had consecrated his childish soul to the service of beauty, truth, and goodness: and he aspires if his life endures to write of Beatrice "what ne'er was writ of woman."

It was on the eighth day of June in 1290 that Beatrice died. Dante was twenty-four or possibly just twenty-five years old, and the *Vita Nuova* must have been completed, in the form in which we now have it, within one or two years of this time.

How large a place in the young citizen and soldier's life was actually occupied by his ideal pas-

Vita Nuova xxv, especially 43–51 [6 *sq.*]. *Cf.* xxxi: 13–24 [xxx: 2 *sq.*], for the obverse principle.

sion it is impossible to say. It is certain that he entered eagerly into many phases of the rich and varied life of Florence in that marvellous period of its history. He was well read in the Latin poets and in the current Latin translations of Aristotle, and he had a good knowledge of astronomy ; but he did not regard himself as a student, and had apparently acquired his knowledge and formed his taste for literature, much as an Athenian of the age of Pericles might have done, under the reaction to his environment as a well-born citizen of " the Great City " on the Arno.

The external means of gratifying and developing his powers would come of themselves, and would hardly need to be sought by one who lived in the fellowship of the minds and in practice of the affairs which made that city great. We know, too, that he was amongst the fore fighters in the battle of Campaldino in the year before Beatrice's death ; and his extant poems, outside the canon of the *Vita Nuova* but belonging to the period covered by its composition, show that without passing beyond the limits of the recognized love-theme and without deflection to any of its baser suggestions he had already found room for a wider and lighter play of fancy and emotion than could harbour in the cloistral atmosphere of the monument of his early idealism.

On the other hand, it would surely be a profound misconception to regard the *Vita Nuova* as something apart that had no vital connection or " exchange of pulses " with the full-blooded life of this

Florentine soldier and man of society and affairs. At its core it asserts itself as a genuine account of the birth in his soul of the love of beauty, goodness, and truth; the conviction that these are realities and not mere dreams; and the consciousness of a mission to make them real to others. This mission in its successive transformations was the inspiration of his life, and it led him at last to the Beatific Vision. In the first chapters of the *Vita Nuova*, therefore, we read the beginnings of the life-history which culminates in the final cantos of the *Paradiso*; but it is no light task to trace the links between the beginning and the end; and as the initial step in any such attempt we must note with closer attention certain details in the *Vita Nuova* the full significance of which might well escape our notice.

The first point to observe concerns those elaborate love-guiles which probably cause a vague uneasiness to many ingenuous readers who perhaps hardly like to recognize it even to themselves. No doubt it is natural for any sensitive soul to wish to shield its inmost life from the intrusions of curiosity. But here, in Dante's case, the influence of the Provençal Troubadours is clearly discernible in the light under which he places the events he narrates. Unmarried women were almost inaccessible in Provençal society, whereas young married ladies were the centres of brilliant circles of admiration, compliment, and chivalrous service. It was to them that the Troubadours paid their court, and as the singer always professed to be very seriously in love with his lady

secrecy became a fixed convention in their poetic tradition. The Troubadour's lady must never be addressed in his poems under her own name.

Should her identity be suspected means must be taken to mislead the "busy-bodies," for whom, in Troubadour literature, there is a special technical term. They are sometimes spoken of almost as if they were an organized body of malignant persecutors of all true lovers, like "the Jews" who lower as a dark background in the Fourth Gospel. The whole scheme was obviously in many cases a mere traditional form. The great lady no doubt would take the homage of her minstrel for the most part in perfect innocence, just for what it was worth; and the supposed secrecy would conceal nothing and would have nothing to conceal. An enlightening though obviously imperfect parallel may be found in the poetic worship of Gloriana by the Elizabethan poets. Nevertheless, the convention had its ultimate ground in the actual social conditions of the Troubadour environment. There were certainly cases in which it closely corresponded with the fact; and in such cases it became a matter of consequence to maintain a real secrecy.

In Dante's Florence, on the contrary, there was no vital sap in this convention; for the social conditions and customs were not such as to support it in any way. So when we find the *Vita Nuova* following the almost stereotyped course of enamourment, concealment by love-guiles, misunderstandings, scandalous imputations, exculpation, and explana-

tion it is impossible not to recognize the force of the Troubadour tradition which may well have reacted unconsciously upon Dante's real conduct and feelings at the time, and more consciously perhaps upon his subsequent interpretation and record of them. Again, when we read his extant poems of this period (some of which have been recovered quite recently), and see that the "feigned" poetic addresses were occasionally carried further than the narrative of the *Vita Nuova* would suggest, the suspicion may well rise in our minds that the passing susceptibilities of a young man's heart gave a greater sincerity to some of his poems to his "screen" ladies than he afterwards chose to admit. Such speculations, however, must in any case be left as mere conjectures. What is certain is that not until the traditional cycle has been completed, and not till the memorable rebuke administered to the poet by a lady belonging to Beatrice's circle has shaken him out of his self-consciousness and artificiality, does the pure stream of lyric rapture by which the *Vita Nuova* lives begin to flow. It is in the first seventeen sections that the Troubadour scaffoldage is clearly apparent to the practised eye; and it is *after* this that all the poems occur which either Dante himself or any of his admirers quote for their own sake.

It is here that the *baldanza d'amore*—the triumph and exultation of Dante's love—pours out its rich, undying utterance.

And again, if the earlier chapters of the *Vita*

Nuova echo the scheme of the Troubadour "progress of love" the prose poem in its entirety may be said to foreshadow in a certain sense the entire scheme of the Comedy, and therefore to become a kind of symbolic epitome of the whole history of man as conceived and set forth by the Church. For in the *Vita Nuova*, too, as in the Comedy, there is an Earthly Paradise and a Fall, and there is a recovery that reopens the gate of Heaven. The whole tale of Dante's early love is surrounded by the breath of Eden. The shadowy suggestion of a Fall appears when in the later portion of the *Vita Nuova* Dante admits a temporary fluctuation in his heart's devotion; and, whatever may have been the case with the earlier "screen" maidens, we are now, at the close, in presence of a veritable conflict of emotions. The story of the Pitiful Lady, towards love of whom Dante was swayed in his affliction, is a touching record of a human experience fully intelligible to every human soul and reflecting not the smallest discredit upon its hero. Yet it is treated by Dante as though it were a kind of lapse from grace that banished him from his Eden. The episode stands quite outside the traditional framework, and the very fact that, as every reader feels, it perplexes the artistic symmetry and beauty of the work, is a pledge of its sincerity as a record.

This, then, is the story: A little more than a year after Beatrice's death Dante noticed that a certain Gentle Lady, who could see him from her window, appeared to regard his forlorn and desolate state with compassion; and he found a strange comfort in the

flow of tears which her sympathy drew from his eyes. Gradually he began to suspect that it was more her own presence and tenderness than any quickening of his thoughts of Beatrice that moved him, and he was shocked to think that he was already half-faithless to the memory that was the consecration of his life. Then he began to ask himself whether this gracious presence was not really a message from Love himself: a message of comfort and of renewed life; an invitation to come back from brooding over the darkness of his loss into the light of present beauty and joy? For a moment the new emotion triumphed, but only to reveal its own inadequacy. It was the desolate cry for consolation that had thrown him upon a "second best" when his only manly course was to endure and to work through his affliction to a yet higher life of realization. A vision of Beatrice, the red-robed child of eight years, as he had first seen her, brought back his wandering heart from this unworthy yearning, and in "grievous penitence" he fixed all his thoughts once more upon Beatrice. Not long afterwards he wrote the final sonnet of the *Vita Nuova*, wherein he tells us (the translation is Rossetti's) how:

Beyond the sphere which spreads to widest space
  Now soars the sigh that my heart sends above:
  A new perception born of grieving Love
Guiding it upward the untrodden ways.
When it hath reached unto the end, and stays,
  It sees a lady round whom splendours move
  In homage: till, by the great light thereof
Abashed, the pilgrim spirit stands at gaze.

It sees her such that when it tells me this
Which it hath seen I understand it not—
It hath a speech so subtle and so fine.
And yet I know its voice within my thought
Often remembereth me of Beatrice:
So that I understand it, ladies mine.

Compare this with the lines in the first Canto of the *Paradiso*:

In that heaven which most receiveth of his light have I been; and have seen things which whoso thence descends hath nor knowledge nor power to retell:
For, as it draws anigh to its desire our intellect plunges so deep that memory cannot follow in the track.
Nathless, whatever of the holy realm I could up-treasure in my memory shall now be matter of my poesy.[1]

Thus does the *Vita Nuova* already faintly foreshadow the *Paradiso*, and with it the essential subjects of the Comedy as a whole.

But we have not yet read quite the last word of the *Vita Nuova*; and that last word is the most significant of all from our present point of inquiry. "After this sonnet," Dante says, "there appeared to me a wondrous vision which made me purpose to

[1] Nel ciel che più della sua luce prende
fu' io, e vidi cose che ridire
nè sa nè può chi di lassù discende;
Perchè, appressando sè al suo desire,
nostro intelletto si profonda tanto,
che retro la memoria non può ire.
Veramente quant' io del regno santo
nella mia mente potei far tesoro,
sarà ora materia del mio canto.

Paradiso i: 4–12.

write no more of this blessed one until such time as I might treat of her more worthily. And to come at this I study all I may, as she knoweth verily. So that, if it be His pleasure by whom all things live that my life endure some few years, I hope to write of her what ne'er was writ of woman." Then follows the concluding prayer that when this task shall be accomplished he may behold the glory of his lady "as she looks upon the face of Him who is blessed for evermore."

This would seem to lead straight to the *Paradiso*; but we have only to study the Comedy in its entirety to see that there lies much between this early vow and its fulfilment, and that before it was finally accomplished it had already been broken, and that more than once. In the *Purgatorio* we read of Dante's meeting with Beatrice in the Earthly Paradise, and we find that not only does she charge him with persistent, nay stubborn, faithlessness to the life and ideals to which she had raised him, but she also declares explicitly that, through dreams and what pleadings else, she herself had called him back from his wanderings on the false path—and had called in vain, "so little did he heed her." It is quite impossible to take this as referring to the innocent yearning during "certain days" for human comfort and affection after Beatrice's death, as recounted in the *Vita Nuova*. There had evidently been some far more real and deeper Fall between the Eden of the

Vita Nuova xliii [xlii]. *Purgatorio* xxx, xxxi, especially xxx: 133–135. *Vita Nuova* xl: 13 [xxxix: 2].

Vita Nuova and the journey of recovery recorded in the *Inferno* and the *Purgatorio*. The "wondrous vision" at the close of the *Vita Nuova* cannot therefore be the great revelation that was afterwards distilled, line by line, into the terzine of the Comedy. It must be one of those fruitlessly tender attempts to arrest the wayward steps of the poet on his downward path to which Beatrice alludes as preceding her appeal to Virgil for help.

We saw from the first that it might prove a difficult task to trace the promise of the *Vita Nuova* up to its fulfilment in the Comedy, and now we need not be surprised if the first steps seem rather to recede from the goal than to approach it. With this secure knowledge, then, of the starting-point and the end, with this anticipation of the intervening obstacles and vacillations, and with this warning that Dante himself may not always have wished to leave his actual footprints clear for us to trace, we may now go forward with the task of following the succession of the poet's works and gaining what light we can from them as to the antecedents of his supreme achievement.

II. THE "CANZONI"

Dante's banishment from Florence took place about eleven and a half years after Beatrice's death, say ten years after the completion of the *Vita Nuova*.

Purgatorio XXX: 136–141.

What can we know of his life during these years? There are records, too scanty but authentic as far as they go, of political and official activities, on which we shall touch in connection with a later period. There are certified copies of legal instruments which show that, in partnership with his brother or on his sole responsibility, he contracted very considerable debts during these years, debts which were not liquidated till after his death. We know that he was married to Gemma, of the great house of the Donati, and that he had at least four children by her. Of his domestic life before his exile we know nothing. The later tradition that he and Gemma lived unhappily together is without any substantive foundation. The very little we know of Gemma herself, who survived her husband for many years, is entirely to her credit. For anything beyond these bare facts we must rely upon Dante's own works and an ambiguous reference to him, here and there, by his contemporaries.

In the *Purgatorio* there is, in addition to the reproaches of Beatrice and the answering confession of the poet, a remarkable passage that has specific reference to the years now under consideration. It is where Dante meets his friend Forese Donati, who was a relative of his wife's, and who died in 1296. Dante says to him that the way they spent their lives in the years of their companionship must be of grievous memory to both of them; and declares, as from the fictitious or ideal date of Easter 1300, that he himself is only now being rescued from that kind

of life by Virgil. There still survives an exchange of Sonnets between the two friends Dante and Forese. They are on a distinctly lower level than anything else that we have from Dante's hand, but there is nothing in them seriously to tarnish his good name.

There is better material for the reconstruction of Dante's intellectual life and development during this decade in the series of *Canzoni*, or Odes, which have come down to us. The *Canzone* is a beautiful form of verse which the Italians had elaborated and systematized, from the practice of the Troubadours, till it became an instrument of unrivalled power for the expression of varied emotions. Dante could work with supreme effectiveness under the combined severity and elasticity of this exquisite species of composition, of which he was truly enamoured. And to the end of his days, though he had poured out his whole soul in his own *Terza Rima*, he doubtless regarded the *Canzone* as the most exalted and majestic form of Italian poetry.

The decade on which we are now engaged is pre-eminently the period of the *Canzone* in Dante's poetic career, though he had done great things with it before and was to do great things with it again.

Now, some of these Odes repeat or echo the motives of the *Vita Nuova* itself, but others are the direct expression of the poet's passion for study. They link themselves to that resolve to dedicate years of strenuous toil to the task of making himself more worthy to write of Beatrice with which the *Vita*

Purgatorio xxiii: 76–84, 115–126.

Nuova closes; and they seem therefore to follow on from that work rather than to repeat its notes. But what was animating Dante at the inception of these systematic studies was surely no prevision of the Comedy, but rather, we may suppose, a conception that Beatrice, in her own right, ought to be to others—to all, indeed, who were worthy—what she had been to the poet himself. If he could show her to others as she truly was, and as she had been seen by him, then she would wake them also to the meaning of life, and to them, too, she would reveal goodness, beauty, and truth as present realities and powers. But in order thus to reveal her he must pass beyond the stage of instinctive perception, and must analyze, evolve, and develop all the implications of that higher life to which he had himself been called and to which he in turn would fain call others. He must not only feel the soul, but must understand the instruments and appliances of that higher wisdom of which he was to be the apostle. Hence his newborn zeal for the deepened study of all branches of truth, including science, theology, and, more especially, philosophy. Such study was now something more than a spontaneous expression of his intellectual alertness and enjoyment of life. It had been drawn into his mission and had become an inspiration and a passion—a passion, as we shall see, that soon acquired independent strength and, forgetting itself as a means, became an end.

But how could this zeal for study express itself in poetry? Here we may detect the first workings

of an impulse, that runs through Dante's whole career, to widen the scope of Italian literature and to annex one after another the provinces over which Latin had hitherto reigned undisputed. It is true that he still does full homage to the Tuscan tradition, but he is already stretching it to cover more than ever it was made for! What he is impelled to express concerns the hopes and fears of the student: his self-distrust battling with his fervour and his ambition, his fits of despair, and the rare moments of triumph when it seemed as though Philosophy herself were smiling upon her devoted servant and opening to him her inmost secrets. But is not this the very theme of love? Surely he who woos Philosophy may best tell of his passion in the consecrated forms of the love lyric. Hence comes the series of "allegorical" poems in which the lady of the poet's vows is none other than my Lady Philosophy herself; and the passion that now sighs and pleads, and now rises to awe-struck and half-tremulous exultation, is the intellectual love that woos that exalted mistress.

To the sympathetic reader there should be no difficulty in determining which of Dante's poems belong to this allegorizing group. The test is a simple one. Does the "allegorical," that is, the philosophical, interpretation of the poem make it more, or does it make it less, psychologically convincing? If what seem like mere elegances or conceits when literally interpreted begin to glow when referred to the experiences of the baffled but indomitable student, then Philosophy is the lady of the

poet's love. If the passion becomes pale, the images less vivid, and the expression strained when Philosophy is substituted for a human personality, then it would be wronging Dante's genius to take the poems on any other footing than as love-poems in the primary sense. And this wrong we must not do him even though it should be at his own bidding!

It is indeed obvious that the application of this canon must be purely subjective; yet it seems safe to say that students who frankly accept it will not differ very materially in the conclusions to which it leads them.

We must follow a little further yet this widening of the domain of love-rhymes, and therefore of Italian literature. Dante was stirred during this period by many other thoughts besides those of the purely speculative student. He was a keen observer of the social conditions and manners around him, and his wrath or contempt was moved by the vulgar pretender to grace and elegance, the selfish and sordid man of wealth, or the soulless herd whose only conception of "nobility" was a combination of distinguished birth with riches, or at best with the conventional tone of good society. In short, as he studied Aristotle's Ethics, let us say, he not only speculated on moral problems, but felt the "tearing indignation" of the Roman satirist raging within him and forcing him to utterance. Despite all his theories, impassioned speech on such subjects must shape itself for him in that vernacular to which (notwithstanding his reverence for Latin and his

easy, forceful handling of it) he felt a connatural affinity that would not be denied.

But how were such themes to be brought within the Tuscan tradition as to Italian poetry? Dante had already prepared the way for himself unconsciously. In the *Vita Nuova* Beatrice is never an isolated figure. She is at a wedding party, or in church, or she is weeping at the bedside of a lost friend, or walking between two companions. The poet delights to surround the central figure of his lady-love with little insets and medallions representing the gracious company of maidens amongst whom she moved, and with whom he might hold converse concerning her even when she herself withheld her salutation.[1] Now, to the mediæval student, and pre-eminently to Dante, abstract study was conceived not only as having in itself an elevating effect upon the mind, but as closely allied to all the virtues. Should Philosophy be Dante's mistress, then Generosity, true Nobility, Graciousness, Justice, and all their train are, to him, his Lady's court; and these may be celebrated by her poet if he dare not, or may not, come into her immediate presence, or if he cannot rise to the full height of his central theme. Thus, if he writes of true Nobility he expressly explains that

Cf. *Convivio* I. xii, xiii.

[1] This feature of the *Vita Nuova* is the more significant inasmuch as, so far as I remember, no Troubadour ever represents his lady as in any such personal relations or concrete environment. She is always the isolated object of his devotion, and is never seen in the ordinary occupations or associations of life. It is only what directly concerns her relations to him or his to her that receives any notice.

it is because his Lady is unpropitious, and he must for a time drop those sweet rhymes of which she is the object, hoping to return to them when she smiles upon him once more; and meanwhile he will at least sing of her friends and so keep near her presence. In the prose commentary which he afterwards composed he explains this to mean that once, when a particularly intricate problem of abstract philosophy baffled him, he turned aside for relief to a question concerning one of the virtues, so as still to keep himself within the environment of his Lady even when she herself rejected his homage. In Dante's Odes, or *Canzoni*, then, we have abundant evidence of his devotion to study, of his broadening social and moral observation, and of the pressure which his artistic genius was already bringing to bear upon conventional limitations of vernacular poetry.

But this is not all. Amongst the poems assigned by common consent to this same decade some of the most splendid breathe a mundane passion—"a terrible and tormenting love," as it has been called, —equally remote from the atmosphere of the *Vita Nuova*, of the Philosophical love-poems, and of the *Paradiso*. Here for the first time we come upon manifestations of Dante's genius which seem not so much to lie outside as to cut clean across the line of progress from the *Vita Nuova* to the *Paradiso*.

Convivio IV, lines 1–20 of the *Canzone*, and chapter i. Cf. *Canzone* xix [Rim. lxxxiii], *Poscia ch'Amor*: 1–19.

That he actually met such " cross ditches "[1] on his path we already know from the whole structure of the Comedy, and more especially from Beatrice's reproaches and Dante's confession in the Earthly Paradise. We shall in due course see reason to connect these said " cross ditches " with the poems we are now considering. They are known as the " Pietra " group, because the constant play upon the word " pietra "—stone or jewel—suggests that Pietra was the name of the lady whom they concern.

If we now put together all that we have gathered of Dante's life during this period and survey it in the light of Beatrice's reproachful declaration that she had in spirit again and again called him, but called in vain, back to the nobler life to which she had for a time uplifted him, we can no longer doubt that what Dante ultimately regarded as his real Fall was subsequent to the compilation of the *Vita Nuova*. If he continued to think at all of the episode of the Gentle Lady in whose sympathy he had once sought comfort the impression might almost merge itself in later experiences as a mere foreshadowing of them ; but in itself it cannot form the ground of the burning shame he feels when standing face to face with Beatrice.

We need not attempt to give precision to the

[1] *Purgatorio* xxxi : 25–27.

Quai fossi attraversati o quai catene
trovasti, per che del passare innanzi
douesti cosi spogliar la spene ?

Vide more especially *Canzone* xii [Rim. ciii].

grounds of Dante's confession in the Earthly Paradise. It is easy to see that there were breaches of what he himself sincerely regarded as divine ordinances which nevertheless woke no spontaneous repugnance in his own mind and carried no implication of baseness when he contemplated them in others, which yet might become the cause of keen self-reproach if he had himself fallen into them. His deepening sense of a moral and religious mission may have held up a standard ever more and more exacting, and may have thrown back upon his past life a more and more searching light, casting an ever darkening shadow upon some of its episodes. Or he may for a time have actually exhibited that combination, not rare in natures of exceptional energy, of high devotion to intellectual pursuits with an addiction to mundane pleasures and indulgences, felt even at the time to be unworthy, and crossed by haunting memories of purer ideals—ideals sometimes clung to for support and sometimes evaded to escape their rebuke.

All we know (and we need not care to know more) is, on the one hand, that to Dante's sensitive conscience there came a time when the contrast between what he had loved and what he had been, caused the bitter shame which stands confessed in the *Purgatorio*; and, on the other hand, that the terzine of the *Paradiso* bear their own witness that they flow from a heart no longer at war with itself, no longer oscillating between renewed and broken vows, no longer seeking compromises or evasions between the ideals

of the saint and the accepted standards of the man of the world. The flame of the *Paradiso* is smokeless.

We have this foreknowledge of the end, but meanwhile it seems impossible not to recognize certain indirections and mental evasions in which for a time Dante's progress was entangled.

III. THE "CONVIVIO" IN ITS APOLOGETIC ASPECT

In the early years of his exile Dante began a treatise (which remained incomplete) on the Italian language in its relation both to other vernaculars, and to Latin. He dealt with the dialectical varieties of Italian and, above all, with the structure of its recognized metrical forms and the possibility of fixing a standard literary Italian which every inhabitant of Italy should recognize as his language but none should be able to claim as his dialect. The chief biographical and personal interest of this treatise is to be found in the evidence it furnishes on three points: (1) On Dante's continued concern with literature, and specifically with Italian poetry, at a period when his own poetic inspiration appears to have been staunched for the time by the upheavals of his life; (2) on his sense of Italy as a social and historical unit with a common heritage of civilization and literature rather than as a single political or administrative area; and (3) on the still narrow limits of his conception of the scope and character of Italian poetry.

It is this last point that interests our present inquiry. The only verse-forms which Dante allows as legitimate are the *Canzone*, the *Ballata*, and the *Sonetto*. All others are "irregular and illegitimate." They would have been relegated to the last place in his treatise had it ever been completed; and even there, we may suppose, would have been dismissed with a brief and disparaging notice. This is weighty though indirect evidence against the accuracy of the contemporary tradition (which is nevertheless too well authenticated to be simply brushed aside) that at the time of his exile Dante had already drafted the first seven Cantos of the *Inferno*. Can it be possible that this early draft is identical with the recorded experiments in a Latin poem on the theme of the Comedy which Dante subsequently abandoned when his conception of the scope of Italian poetry had so notably expanded? It should be observed, however, that he already admits the subjects of War and Virtue, side by side with Love, within the legitimate range of vernacular poetry. So there is already some progress towards a wider conception of its function.

Of more direct and varied interest to us is another treatise, also a fragment, that occupied Dante during these earlier years of exile (1302–1308). The *Convivio*, or Banquet, is the monument of what Dante himself calls his "second love" in contradistinction to his love of Beatrice.

De Vulgari Eloquentia II. iii: 8–11 [2], ii: 41–83 [5–9]. *Cf.* Appendix, p. 152.

At the end of the *Vita Nuova* it is for the sake of making himself more worthy to commemorate Beatrice that Dante dedicates himself to study. But when in the *Convivio* he presents us with the record of the fruits of that study we notice a subtle but significant change in his phraseology, for he tells us that he took to study in hope of consolation under his loss, and no longer represents it as a "preparation." Have we then in the *Vita Nuova* the register of a resolve and in the *Convivio* the record of a result which did not quite conform to it? So it would seem; for in the later work Dante shows us very clearly that whatever it was that he sought in his ardent application to study, what he actually found was not only consolation, but something more: a new mission, namely, a new inspiration, and even a new "enamourment," in the ardour of which his conception of a work to commemorate Beatrice sank into the background of his mind and was indefinitely postponed though not formally abandoned. As to this there is no room for doubt, for he tells us how when he sought consolation in Cicero and Boetius, "as it may chance that a man goes in search of silver and beyond his purpose findeth gold, the which some hidden cause brings to view, not peradventure without divine command: so I, who was seeking to console myself, found not only a remedy for my tears, but terms of authors and of sciences and of books, pondering upon which I judged that Philosophy was a thing supreme." And even more explicitly he declares, in relation to his self-abandon-

ment to this "second love," and its victory over his absorption in memories of Beatrice, that "a man ought not, on account of a greater friend, to forget the services received from a lesser; but, if it be right to follow the one and leave the other, the better should indeed be followed but the other not abandoned without some fitting lamentation; wherein the man gives cause to the one he follows to love him the more."

It is easy to reconstruct the story so far. And the fragment of the large design of the *Convivio* that was actually executed leaves us in little doubt on the main point. It may often happen that a task undertaken in the first instance for a specific purpose beyond itself presently gains a hold in the strength of its own fascination, thrusts itself in front of that for the sake of which it was originally sought, and becomes an avowed end instead of a means. So it was with Dante. He became enamoured of Philosophy for her own sake and was inspired with a passion to reveal her beauty and sing her praises to all who would hear. As for Beatrice, he retracts no word he has spoken in the *Vita Nuova*. He affirms that she still "lives in heaven with the angels," in that better life to which he himself looks forward after this, and "on earth with his soul." But he means to speak of her no more in "this book" (the *Convivio*) on which he is now engaged. Did he still mean ultimately to write of her "what had

Vita Nuova xliii [xlii]. *Convivio* II. xiii: 3–40 [xii: 1–5], xvi: 50–58, 98–105 [xv: 6, 12]; III. i: 2 [1].

never been written else of woman" ? Perhaps. But the Lady of his present love is one greater than woman, for she is "the daughter of God," nay, the Divine Wisdom's self!

The splendid eloquence of the opening passage of the *Convivio* is sufficient evidence that the main impulse that urged its author forward was a missionary ardour for bringing the feeding truths of philosophy and perhaps yet more the pure intellectual joy of study within the reach of busy men and women who had no opportunity to embrace the life of the professed student. But combined with this primary object were others hardly less near to Dante's heart. It will be remembered that he had already begun his lover-like service of my Lady Philosophy in a series of *Canzoni*, or Odes, directly or indirectly consecrated to her; and so it seemed natural enough, not only to Dante but to his contemporaries also (for not one of them hints that there was anything strange about it), that his encyclopædia of popular science and theology should take the shape of a commentary or exposition based on the Odes which had already made him famous throughout Italy as a poet. The idea was, of course, suggested by the fact that some of the Odes in question were in truth a glorification of Philosophy, or of her "friends," and would naturally take their place in the elaborated expression of his devotion to her service. But others, as

Convivio I. i: 111–115 [16]; II. ii: 6–8 [1], ix: 132–137, 49–55 [viii: 16, 7], xiii: 71 [xii: 9]; III. xiv: 51–60 [6 *sq.*] *Cf.* p. 96 *sq.*

we have seen, were quite alien in their origin from the praise of Philosophy. To represent them also as hymns to Philosophy, and so to bring them into relation with the scheme, would require amazing *tours de force* of allegorical interpretation, such as could only have been contemplated in an age accustomed to all manner of fantastic feats in this direction. But Dante's age was such. Not only the Scriptures and the works of the Latin poets, but the works of God and Nature too, and even the lives or actions of men, might be taken to owe their significance not to what they were, but to what they meant as symbolical expressions of the divine purpose. Moreover, it did not at all follow that the poets or heroes themselves were always conscious of the inner meaning of their utterances or actions. Virgil, for instance, did not know that he was prophesying of Christ in his Fourth Eclogue, nor, I suppose, did Jacob's wives, Leah and Rachel, know that they were types of Martha and Mary to come, and that they represented the Practical and the Contemplative life respectively. Nor was consistency demanded of the allegorist. The same symbol might stand for different or opposite things in different connections, perhaps might even bear contradictory significances in the same passage according to the scheme of interpretation that was being applied to it at the moment.

Dante had already explained in the *Vita Nuova* that passages in his poems which he meant to be taken as applying to another lady when he wrote them he wishes to be understood now as applying

to Beatrice. Might not the process be reversed? Might not a poem which was originally written in connection with Dante's first love be interpreted in relation to the second? By such shifts as this the whole body of the *Canzoni* of which he desired to speak might be included in his work. This form of presentation, besides maintaining continuity (by linking his past to his future tribute to my Lady Philosophy), and besides following the model of the *Vita Nuova* (by making a prose framework for a collection of poems), would have the additional advantage of giving him a good excuse for an attempt which he longed to make on its own merits—the attempt, namely, to extend the range and raise the dignity of Italian Prose as he had already helped to raise Italian Verse.

His cyclopædia must be written in the vernacular for many good reasons, but, if it was to aim at being at once severe in its argument and of cultured beauty in its form, prejudice would be against the vernacular. Some *excuse* for this new advance, to protect the underlying *reasons* for it, would be welcome; and if the work was presented as a commentary on an Italian text the excuse might be found in the congruity between the requirements of the "master" text and the powers of the "servant" commentary. Now, some of Dante's poems, already famous, fell in quite easily with his central purpose in writing the *Convivio*. Such were the genuinely philosophical and quasi-philosophical Odes, including the noble

Cf. p. 90. *Convivio* I. x: 74–102 [11–13], xii: 1–17 [1 *sq.*].

poem (one of the few that we may be sure were written during his exile) that begins :

Tre donne intorno al cor mi son venute,

which would give him occasion to treat of Justice and incidentally to deliver his own apologia for his political life and to protest against his unjust exile.

But there were also Odes—and amongst them those that threatened to be the most recalcitrant to the allegorical treatment—which Dante had special reasons for bringing under it, because he wished to remove the impression they gave (or, at least, to dissociate himself from it) when taken in their natural and obvious sense. This is the next point that we must examine.

In the introductory Treatise of the *Convivio* Dante apologizes on two grounds for speaking of himself. One of them is that it is legitimate for a man to speak of himself if thereby he can clear himself " of some great disgrace." And he goes on to say, " I myself fear the disgrace of having succumbed to so great a passion as he who reads the aforenamed Odes must conceive to have had mastery over me. Which disgrace is entirely quenched by this present discourse concerning myself, which shows that not passion, but virtue, was the moving cause." Now, amongst the fourteen Odes that seem to have been embraced in the scheme of the *Convivio* those that belong to the Pietra group are the only ones which even the most sensitive conscience could regard as

Convivio IV. xxvii : 100–103 [11]; I. ii : 114–130 [15–17].

reflecting disgrace upon their author. And since we have sufficiently clear indications that these particular Odes were actually to find a place in the work we may take it as certain that the whole elaborate scheme of a twofold interpretation, literal and allegorical, which is laid down in the second Treatise of the *Convivio*, was primarily designed for application to them, and is only consequentially attempted, or is even abandoned, in other cases.

Thus the second Treatise, commenting on the Ode

Voi che intendendo il terzo ciel movete,

is, as we shall see, an unsuccessful attempt to explain away the natural and very innocent meaning of the poem and to force an allegorical interpretation upon it. In the next commentary, contained in the third Treatise, the poem to be dealt with,

Amor che nella mente mi raggiona,

was really written in praise of Philosophy, and accordingly the case is here reversed and extreme difficulty arises in keeping up any semblance of a literal interpretation as distinct from the allegory. The fourth and last Treatise, commenting on the Ode

Le dolci rime d'amor ch'io solea,

deals with the nature of true Nobility, and does not lend itself in any kind of way to the twofold inter-

Convivio IV. xxvi: 64–70 [8]. *Cf.* "Così nel mio parlar voglio esser aspro," line 36. (The mention of Dido is the more significant as it is the only instance of a proper name occurring in a *Canzone* of Dante's.) *Convivio* II. ii: 52–57 [6].

pretation. Here the author is obliged frankly to abandon his method. Fortunately the Pietra poems were never reached; but anyone who reads them will agree that the attempt to allegorize the finest of them would have proved still more unconvincing than it is in the case of the *Canzone*

Voi che intendendo il terzo ciel movete,

commented on in the second Treatise, to an examination of which we must now turn.

This beautiful and touching poem rose out of the episode of the Gentle Lady in whose sympathy Dante had found a brief solace in the hour of his deepest affliction. Was she not (we have already supposed Dante might ask himself) a kind of foreshadowing or anti-type of the more exalted Lady in whom he was indeed to find comfort, not for "certain days" only, but through many a year of trouble and of exile? Might not the song once sung to her in the moment of her passing triumph be fitly adopted as a sister by the philosophic *Canzoni*? And might not the transient events that gave rise to it be read and explained in the light of their after-revealed significance?

There might be some subjective truth in such a re-reading of the past. But the objective record stubbornly opposed itself to any attempt to show that the meaning now imported into the poem was that which it was originally intended to convey, or even cryptically to hint at. In the *Vita Nuova* Dante not only

Convivio IV. i: 83–92 [10 *sq.*].

confesses to love-guiles, involving intentional mystification, but also declares that certain passages in his poems were intended to be understood one way when they were written, but are to be understood now, and were secretly meant from the first, in another way. In these cases he perhaps leaves us in doubt which of the two meanings was really his when he wrote the lines in question. But there is no room even for doubt in the case of the poem we are now considering. For not only is the allegorical meaning forced and unnatural, but the objective facts give a conclusive verdict against it.

In the *Vita Nuova* the Gentle Lady appears when "a certain space" has elapsed since the first anniversary of Beatrice's death and tries the poet's constancy for "certain days," during which she enjoys a brief triumph. Then the memory of Beatrice victoriously reasserts itself. Dante's thought of the other lady was, he declares, "most base" in itself and "gentle" only in so far as its object was a "Gentle Lady." He "repents grievously" of it, and with his "whole heart shame-laden" turns back to Beatrice. In the still extant sonnet,

Parole mie, che per lo mondo siete

Vita Nuova v: 22–32 [3, 4], vi: 1–12 [1 *sq.*]. *Cf.* Sonnet xxxii [Rim. lii]: *Guido, i vorrei che tu e Lapo ed io*, in which lines 9, 10 should read:

E monna Vanna e monna Lagia poi
con quella ch' è sul numer de le trenta,

as in the new *Opere di Dante* (Firenze, 1921); also *Vita Nuova* vii–x (especially vii: 44–47 [7]), viii: 70–72 [12].

(not included in the *Vita Nuova*), he expressly declares that this very poem *Voi che intendendo*, etc., was addressed to the Lady in whom his heart "went astray," and that no members of the group to which it belongs are any longer to abide with her, "for Love is not there."

In the *Convivio* the Lady of the second love first appears to him considerably more than three years after Beatrice's death. It is some thirty months after this before he had sufficiently overcome the first difficulties of study to feel the full power of his enamourment. Some fifteen years, say, after Beatrice's death, when he writes the *Convivio*, the Second Love still holds him in its full strength, and he means to speak of Beatrice no more in the work that is devoted to its expression. Instead of being ashamed of it he glories in it as in the better treasure he has now found.

And again, in commenting on one of the poems addressed to the Gentle Lady in the *Vita Nuova*, he had expressly said that "heart" was to be taken to mean "appetite" as opposed to reason. Now, the careful reader may note that if this meaning were assigned to the word in the present connection it would make the poem harmonize completely with

Vita Nuova xxxv: 1–6, xxxvi: 1–13 [xxxiv: 1, xxxv: 1 *sq.*], xl: 1–23 [xxxix: 1–3], xxxix: 28–32 [xxxviii: 4]. *Convivio* II. ii: 1 *sqq.* [for the "period" of Venus referred to *vide* Lubin's *Dante e gli astronomi Italiani* (Trieste, 1895). *Cf.* "Temple Classics" *Convivio*, p. 433], *Convivio* II. xiii: 49–52 [xii: 7], ix: 49–55 [viii: 7], and (as already cited) xvi: 50 *sqq.* [xv: 6].

the literal story as told and regarded in the *Vita Nuova*, but would ruin the whole allegorical interpretation offered in the *Convivio*; and it is evidently with this in his mind that Dante now warns his readers against taking the word in this poem to mean "any special part of the soul or body," and bids them understand it simply as the inner man. Surely all this amounts to a scarcely veiled acknowledgement that we are to take the assertion as to the meaning of the poem rather as defining his present attitude of mind than as faithfully interpreting its original meaning. Can Dante really have expected or, in spite of his protestations, intended that they should be understood in any other way?

It is now perhaps sufficiently clear that the allegorizing of this particular poem can hardly have been undertaken on its own merits, and that it is but a part of a general scheme which was conceived with special relation to the Pietra group of poems, from the implications of which Dante was seriously anxious to dissociate himself.

As to these magnificent poems themselves I cannot believe that if they had been written by any other poet they would have been felt by Dante to throw "disgrace" upon their author, or would have alienated his heart from him. But it is equally certain that the passion which breathes through them would

Vita Nuova xxxix: 33–37, 55 *sq.* [xxxviii: 5, 7]. *Convivio* II. vii: 17–22 [vi: 2]. As to the allegory, *vide* passages already cited: *Convivio* II. ii: 52–57 [6]; I. ii: 114–123 [15, 16]. Cf. *Purgatorio* xxxi: 34–36.

have called for the cancelling penitence of Purgatory and was alien from the note of the *Convivio*.

But, whatever importance may be attached to this attempt to find in the *Convivio* the half-obliterated traces of the false paths on which Dante declares in the *Purgatorio*, with agonized self-reproaches, that he had trodden since the days of the *Vita Nuova*, our estimate of his actual interests, convictions, and enthusiasms when writing the *Convivio* itself is quite independent of this speculative element. As a veritable document of the stage in Dante's mental history at which it was composed—as distinct from a somewhat blurred record of experiences that had preceded it—it presents its own problems, the solution of which is unaffected by the success or failure of the interpretation that has now been given of some of its incidental features. Bearing this in mind, and welcoming the relief of treading on firmer ground and finding less uneasy footing, we may now turn to these fresh problems.

IV. THE "CONVIVIO" IN ITS POSITIVE CONTENT

As to the sincerity and the exalted character of Dante's second enamourment there can be no doubt, and we must now turn to the prose text of the *Convivio* in order to form a clearer conception of its significance. In doing so we must look both backward and forward—to the *Vita Nuova* and to the Comedy. Dante's first love, the Beatrice of the

Vita Nuova, is the impersonation of goodness, beauty, and truth. His second love, my Lady Philosophy, impersonates nothing, for she is not a person at all, but only a personification, which may be, and in this case is, a very different thing. A personification is primarily a figure of speech or of rhetoric, and it does not necessarily demand any greater effort of the imagination or expenditure of feeling than is involved in an initial letter or a vocative case. The object of Dante's second love does indeed represent more, and far more, than this, for she inspires a genuine passion of devotion. But she remains a personification, and never becomes a person. Even the evanescent personality which she borrows from her (fictitious, as we have seen) identification with the Gentle Lady of the *Vita Nuova* and the *Canzone* is virtually repudiated in the *Convivio*. This lack of personality becomes all the clearer if we compare her with impersonations of human and divine wisdom in the Virgil and the Beatrice of the Comedy.

As to the vividness of Virgil's personality there can be no difference of feeling. The very passages that are framed to fit his allegorical significance most closely are sometimes the most poignant in the well-nigh intolerable pressure of their appeal on behalf of the Exile from heaven—as, for instance, in his words to Dante :

> For as I lived a rebel to His sway,
> The Emperor, Who Governeth On High,
> Doth all approach through me unto His Courts deny
> (Musgrave),

or to Statius: "May the true court which bindeth me in eternal exile bring thee in peace to the council of the blessed." Or where Statius tells him, "'Twas thou didst light my way to God. Thou didst as he who, stepping through the night, beareth the light behind him, to himself of no avail, but making clear the path to them that follow." Or in the last scene, when he vanishes before the presence of Beatrice.

Beatrice is generally less vividly felt by the reader as a personality than Virgil is. Nor is the fusion of the biographical and the allegorical elements that combine in her portrayal so complete as in his case. But at least there can be no doubt of the sense of her personality in Dante's own mind, and her allegorical significance even at its highest never empties her of individuality. Thus, while nothing but the thought that she represents Revelation could make it natural, or even tolerable, to introduce her as riding in a chariot (the Church) drawn by Christ himself in the form of a griffon; yet it is in this very scene that her personal appeal to Dante breaks through all allegorical swathings, and every unsophisticated reader feels that two human personalities stand face to face.

But in the *Convivio* Philosophy has no personality. The lady of the Ode—

Amor che nella mente mi raggiona,

or the *Ballade*—

Voi chi sapete raggionar d'amore,

Inferno i: 124–126. *Purgatorio* xxi: 16–18, xxii: 67–69, xxx: 43–54

may smile or frown as she will, but we never see either smile or frown pass over a human countenance. The Odes that were truly addressed to Philosophy are neither allegorical nor literal in any vital sense; for they are merely figurative, and Augustine has taught us to distinguish between figure and allegory. Thus, when Scripture speaks of the divine power as "the arm of God" the phrase does not even literally refer to any bodily organ. It is a figure for "effective power," and that is what it directly suggests. And so it is with the smile and frown of the Lady of Dante's second love. They are just as purely figurative as the smile on the face of Wordsworth's "Duty."

Indeed, this could not be otherwise, for no human personality, not even that of a Beatrice, could bear the strain of intimate assimilation to the exalted Lady of the *Convivio*. It is only by virtue of vagueness and indefiniteness of outline that she can cover the whole range of the poet's imperfectly co-ordinated beliefs and feelings.

For since Dante is a devout Christian believer and the Lady of his second love is no other than Wisdom herself, it follows that she is that very Wisdom celebrated in the Book of Proverbs and in the Apocryphal Book of Wisdom. Thus, it is of her that it was written "From the beginning, before the ages, was I created." She is "The glow of the Eternal Light, the spotless mirror of the majesty of God." She is "The spouse of the Emperor of Heaven . . . and not his spouse only, but his sister and his beloved

daughter." It was with her that God began the universe and, in particular, the movement of the heavens. The angels gaze upon her continuously though we mortals can hold but intermittent converse with her. And finally (since the "Wisdom" of Proverbs is no other than the "Word" of the proem of S. John's Gospel), it was she that so loved the world that she came in our likeness to direct our course aright.

The Beatrice of the Comedy, in her "allegorical" capacity of Revelation, may be drawn by Christ himself in the chariot of the Church, may be surrounded by prophets and evangelists and angels, may have been attended by the moral and theological virtues "before she descended to earth," but she could not have been identified even allegorically with the Second Person of the Trinity; and, as we have seen, it is in the very passage in which her allegorical character reaches its highest point of exaltation that our sense of her human personality becomes most vivid.

Beatrice, then, even in the Comedy, always remains a personality. The Lady of Dante's second love neither is nor can be anything more than a personification. But what does she personify?

To answer this question fully we must consult not

Convivio III. xiv: 58–64 [7], xv: 54 *sq.* [5], xii: 115–118 [14], xv: 157–159 [15], xiii: 46–55, 70–75 [5, 7], xv: 180–184 [17]. *Cf.* II. and III. *passim*. It must be a strong faith in their allegorizing theory that has enabled some commentators to find a reference to this august Lady in the "pargoletta, o altra vanità" of *Purgatorio* xxxi: 59 *sq.*

only the selected passages in which she is approximated to, or identified with, the " Word " that was made flesh, but the great body of the prose of the *Convivio*. We shall there find that the Philosophy of whom Dante is enamoured includes not only theology, but all the humbler branches of study, down to arithmetic, logic, and grammar (that is to say, the Latin language and literature). She is, in short, the comprehensive and necessarily vague and many-coloured symbol of all wisdom, human and divine; and no one who neglects or depreciates any branch of knowledge is worthy to be regarded as her lover. The differentiation, then, between secular and sacred learning that is so prominent in the symbolism of the Comedy finds no expression at all in that of the *Convivio*.

It is true, as we shall see, that the fact and the importance of Revelation as part, and that the highest part, of Wisdom are already recognized in the *Convivio* ; but Beatrice is not yet brought into any special relation with it, as she is in the Comedy. On the contrary, in the conflict between the new love and the old, Beatrice is not a symbol of Revelation or of anything else. She is just the Florentine maiden who lives in heaven with the angels and in Dante's memory on earth. The great scheme of study which was undertaken for her glorification has now passed, in its own strength, out of her domain. Her victorious rival, under whose inspiration Dante enters on the high emprise of the *Convivio*, is the

Convivio II. xiv, xv ; III. xi : 94–129 [9–12].

collective symbol of Wisdom under all her aspects, including the revealed truths of Theology.

It is to a due appreciation of these facts that we must look for a solution of the problem that has so long exercised the minds of Dantists as to the exact place and meaning that must be assigned to the *Convivio* in relation to Dante's other works and to his mental and spiritual history in general.

The conception of personified Wisdom did not originate with Dante. Tradition assigned to Solomon all the most important utterances of the Hebrew sages. And so the Wisdom that is so splendidly personified in the Book of Proverbs and in the Wisdom of Solomon might be regarded as at one moment inspiring her royal pupil with homely proverbial truths, at another teaching him to speak "of trees from the cedar which is in Lebanon even unto the hyssop that springeth out of the wall," or "of beasts and of fowls and of creeping things and of fishes," and at yet another inviting him to hold intercourse with her because she was "privy to the mysteries of the knowledge of God."

The more immediate source of Dante's conception of personified Philosophy, however, is to be found not so much in the Old Testament as in one of the very books by which, as he tells us, he sought consolation after the death of Beatrice. For to

Proverbs viii : 1—ix : 6. 1 Kings iv : 33. Wisdom of Solomon viii : 4. [In the Vulgate, however, somewhat less emphatically than in the Greek and the A.V., *doctrix enim est disciplinæ Dei.*

Convivio II. xiii : 14–16 [xii : 2].

Boetius in his captivity and despondence Philosophy appeared in person to minister consolation. Her "undivided robe," representing the practical and theoretic sciences in their continuous unity, was woven by her own hands and "at one moment she confined herself within the wonted stature of a mortal and at another her towering height seemed to strike against heaven, nay, when she fully raised her head she even pierced into heaven itself and drew up the gaze of man in the vain attempt to follow."[1]

This figure of the Boetian Wisdom with cloud-girt brow was known to mediæval art, and the conception would be familiar to Dante's readers. But the interesting point is that, at bottom, it is not a specifically Christian but a characteristically Ethnic conception. It is important to realize this, and to do so we must dwell for a moment upon the interesting personality of Boetius himself.

The writings of Boetius (475–525 A.D.) long presented a curious problem to the historians and critics. His great prison book, the *Consolatio Philosophiæ*, remains throughout on the plane of Ethnic philosophy and religion. There is nothing in

[1] Boetius: *Consolatio Philosophiæ*, Lib. I, Prosa 1. The translation in the text is free. The original runs: "Nam nunc quidem ad communem sese hominum mensuram cohibebat, nunc vero pulsare cælum summi verticis cacumine videbatur: quæ cum caput altius extulisset, ipsum etiam cælum penetrabat, respicientiumque hominum frustrabatur intuitum." Her robes were "indissolubili materia perfectæ," and the Delphin editor, I think rightly, explains *indissolubilis* as *individua*, which reminds us of the seamless garment in John xix: 23.

it to indicate that the author is a Christian. There is no reference to the Christian Scriptures, no recognition of Revelation as distinct from philosophic reasoning, no trace of any specific Christian doctrine or article of faith, and no appeal to rewards or punishments in a future life. It is throughout a noble plea for the thesis that if we take life as we find it and rightly weigh its values we shall see that the good man is never to be pitied and the bad man never to be envied. It was in these thoughts that Boetius found consolation in his hour of need.

But, nevertheless, several theological tracts on the doctrine of the Trinity and on the two natures in the person of Christ are extant bearing his name; and on the strength of them he received unsuspecting hospitality amongst the Christians for many centuries. His teaching was a counterpoise, assimilated without any sense of opposition, to excessive scripturalism of argument and other-worldliness of appeal, and as such had undoubted spiritual value. He has been happily described as "the light of a thousand years," and it has been said that from his own day to the time of the Renaissance there was probably no book outside the canon that administered strength and consolation to so many Christian souls.

No wonder that in the more critical days that followed the revival of letters the authenticity of the theological treatises was assailed and, indeed, found few competent defenders. On the other hand, more recent researches have placed the Boetian authorship of these essays beyond the reach of cavil. It had

always been well known that Boetius was the intimate friend and associate of the leading Christian scholars of his day, and it now seems obvious that whereas he accepted Christianity sincerely and unquestioningly, yet his active interests were those of a secular or detached student. He wrote standard treatises on arithmetic and music, for instance, translated logical treatises of Aristotle, and intended to carry out a vast scheme of work on similar lines. He was an accomplished Platonist, too ; and thus it was with the great Ethnic thinkers, saints, and seers that he spent his days, from them that he drew his spiritual nourishment, and upon their support that he fell back in his misfortunes. But he was quite willing, we may suppose, to lend a hand to his ecclesiastical friends by throwing into "elegant" philosophical form the more recondite articles of the creed which he and they alike professed.[1] And the character of the tracts themselves is in full harmony with this hypothesis.

I have dwelt at length on the position of Boetius because it is so singularly helpful to us in appreciating that of Dante at the *Convivio* stage of his evolution. The philosophy personified in the *Consolatio* covers the whole system of studies of which Dante

[1] On Boetius *vide* "Temple Classics" *Paradiso* note on x : 124–129, Wicksteed's *Reactions between Dogma and Philosophy* (London, 1920), pp. 42–45, 89 *sqq.*, and (for the authenticity of the Theological tracts) *Anecdoton Holderi*, Hermann Usener (Leipzig, 1877). Even in the Middle Ages some few readers noted the unorthodox or non-Christian tone of the *Consolatio*. *Vide* Nietzsch : *Das System des Boethius* (Berlin, 1860), pp. 27 *sqq.*, and Migne : *Pat. Lat.* lxiv : col. 1239 *sqq.*

was at this time really enamoured; but she does not cover all he believed. Like Boetius, only more so, he accepted and reverenced as true the whole scheme of Christian doctrines, though his mind was not habitually engaged on it for its own sake. Specifically Christian subjects of speculation had not yet wound themselves into his inmost affections. They had made as yet no large contribution to the gathered stores of his mind, nor did they spontaneously present him with the examples and illustrations he needed in his discourse. But on the other hand they had already fired his imagination as they never did that of Boetius. And therefore the Lady of his second love is constantly addressed in terms and endowed with attributes alien to the *Philosophia Consolatrix* of Boetius, on which she is modelled. To borrow the imagery of the Gospels, Dante's "Philosophy," in the *Convivio*, has a net which will hold all the great fishes of Boetius without breaking, but we see that the yet greater draft of fishes which this same net is already opening itself to receive will inevitably burst it in the end.

Thus Dante recognizes, as we have seen, the distinction between Revelation and Reason and the supremacy of the latter. But the distinction finds no recognition in the symbolism of the *Convivio* and makes no contribution to its store of examples. In like manner the Christian contrast between the practical and the contemplative life is expressed in no such symbolism as that of Leah and Rachel in the

John xxi: 11. Luke v: 6.

Comedy, and has not worked itself into conscious separation from the Aristotelian contrast between the practical or civic and the theoretical or speculative life. But, on the other hand, the whole range of earthly activities and speculations already catch a glow from their association with their heavenly analogues, are uplifted into a region of intenser spiritual fervour, and are inspired with a deeper significance by the reaction upon them of the theological studies which have not yet asserted their direct ascendency in the student's mind. In all this the *Convivio* represents an advance towards something not yet fully apprehended. It is expectant and transitional. It does not reveal, as has sometimes been supposed, a lapse from a more advanced position once held, but a reaching forth towards one yet to be taken.

These characteristics of the *Convivio* we must now bring out in detail. To begin with, Dante accepts the distinction between Reason and Revelation and the more exalted claims of the latter without qualification. This could hardly be otherwise, for at this time he was a diligent student of the *Contra Gentiles* of S. Thomas, and this very distinction and gradation is the vertebral column to which all the members of that treatise are articulated. "The Emperor of the Universe," Dante declares, being "the light which illuminates us in the darkness," told us the truth about the angels, "which we could not know, neither truly see, without him." There are truths

II. vi: 8–20 [v: 2, 3].

concerning our immortality which "we see perfectly by Faith, but see by Reason with a certain darkening shadow." He who created our reason expressly willed that it should not cover the whole range of his power, and established upon the miracles that transcend reason's grasp that faith which matters more to the human race than anything else whatever, since by it we escape eternal death and gain eternal life. Where the teaching of the philosophers and of Christian doctrine coincide, "the Christian doctrine is of greater force, and shatters all cavil in virtue of the supreme light of heaven that illuminates it." For holy Church is the "spouse and secretary" of Christ, "who cannot lie." And so in the Song of Songs "all the sciences are called queens and concubines and handmaidens," but Theology "is called the dove, because she is subject to no aspersions of contention; and she is called perfect, because she gives us perfect vision of the Truth in which our soul finds rest." So far all is in very near conformity with the teaching of the *Contra Gentiles*.

Yet it was from Boetius and Cicero, as he tells us, and not from the Bible or Aquinas, that Dante had learned to regard my Lady Philosophy as "a thing supreme" and to hail her as "The daughter of God, the Queen of all." And even where he expressly contrasts the Natural and the Theological ap-

II. ix: 127 *sq.* [viii: 15]; III. vii: 157 *sqq.* [15 *sq.*]; IV. xv: 90–96 [9]; II. vi: 33 *sq.*, iv: 31 *sq.* [v: 5, iii: 10], xv: 179–184 [xiv: 20]. *Cf.* Song of Songs vi: 8, 9 [*Vulg.* 7, 8]; xiii: 14–74 [xii: 2–9].

proaches to truth he seems insensible to any real difference between them; for when after treating of the divine seed of Nobility in man by " the natural way " he turns to the consideration of the same subject " by the theological way " he quotes Isaiah, indeed, on the seven Gifts of the Spirit, but the only conclusion he reaches is the very " natural " one that man should exercise himself in right conduct and the restraint of his passions " as Augustine, and also Aristotle, would have him do." And yet it is on this very passage in Isaiah that Aquinas founds his doctrine of the difference between the " natural " and the " infused " virtues, and erects his whole theory of the higher Christian Ethic which (rising far above the natural ethic of Aristotle) expresses itself in the Sermon on the Mount and specifically in the Beatitudes. No clearer proof could be needed that at this time, though Dante had accepted the conception of Christian faith and experience which afterwards found its symbol in Beatrice, he had not yet assimilated it. And again, in the very sentence in which he identifies his Lady with the Logos of the Gospel of John, he goes on to illustrate the all-absorbing devotion with which she inspires her lovers by citing the examples of Democritus, Plato, Aristotle, Zeno, Socrates, and Seneca without adducing a single instance from the Old or New Testament or from the lives of Christian saints or heroes.

IV. xxi : 100–133 [11–14].
III. xiv : 62–100 [7–10].

It need not surprise us after this to find that on Dante's lips the "Celestial Athens" is as natural an expression for Heaven as the "Celestial Jerusalem" would be, and in a beautiful symbolic passage we actually find him saying of the virtues of Faith, Hope, and Charity that "it is by these virtues that we rise to that celestial Athens where Stoics, Peripatetics, and Epicureans, in the light of the eternal Truth, harmoniously unite in one will." Though in another place, with closer approach to Christian propriety, he takes the three Marys at the tomb of Christ as symbols of the "three sects of the active (as distinguished from the contemplative) life—to wit, the Epicureans, the Stoics, and the Peripatetics," who seek the true blessedness where it is not to be found, namely, "in the tomb, which is to say in this present world." Dante is rightly admired for his consistency, but it is not to the *Convivio* that his admirers must appeal when they wish to illustrate this characteristic. The Boetian net is not yet broken, but it is under a strain that it cannot long bear; and it is worth noting that the passage last cited—the nearest to the doctrine of the Comedy that we have yet noticed—occurs in the last Treatise of the *Convivio*, the one in which the allegorical system of interpretation of the Odes is abandoned. We shall presently see (p. 115 *sqq.*) that in another respect also this same Book, or Treatise, betrays the ripening of Dante's mind towards its full maturity; but mean-

III. xiv: 136–141 [15]; IV. xxii: 149–174 [14, 15] (reading of the Florentine *Testo Critico*).

while this wavering treatment of the Ethnic schools of philosophy challenges attention to the unstable equilibrium of the teaching of the *Convivio* on the subject of the relation of earthly to heavenly fruition.

And this brings us to the next point. The Aristotelian distinction between the Practical or Civic and the Theoretic or Speculative life is in a measure parallel to the Christian distinction between the Active and the Contemplative life. But the two systems are far from completely coinciding. The Practical life, as conceived by Aristotle, is concerned with those activities which make a man a good citizen, alike in the offices of peace and of war, while the Christian writers generally mean by the Active life devotion to "good works"; and again, on Aristotle's lips the Speculative life covers every form of the pursuit and enjoyment of truth, which is the proper business of the philosopher or student. It includes, no doubt, that intense but effortless contemplation and enjoyment of truth possessed which is the highest self-realization, and which is the only life that we can reasonably think of as lived by the Divine being or beings; but it includes also every humbler branch of the pursuit of truth, whereas the Christian "contemplation" is of divine things alone. And seeing that in this life we can only know God by his effects and never in his essence, contemplation can never be perfect here. Only the blessed spirits, whether angels or men, who "see God" can live this life at its highest; though pondering on the truths of revealed religion and on

the confident expectation of the ultimate vision may already give us a foretaste of heavenly bliss even on earth, and may raise us almost above the limits of our human nature. Such, at least, was the Christian doctrine dominant in Dante's day, and it is from this doctrine that the Comedy, as a living and organic whole, draws its vital breath. Thus Dante's illustrations of contemplation, not only in heaven, but on earth, are drawn in the Comedy from the ranks of the Christian mystics: a Richard of S. Victor who "was more than man" in his concentration of thought on divine things, a Bernard "who in this life, by contemplation, tasted of the peace" of heaven, or a Dionysius "who saw deepest into the nature and the ministrations" of the angels, in virtue of "the great passion with which he set himself to the contemplation of their orders." But in the *Convivio* it is otherwise. Dante does indeed repeatedly and clearly announce the principle that the full felicity of contemplation, which consists in seeing God, cannot be attained in this life. This same article of faith is developed with extreme beauty and eloquence by S. Thomas in the *Contra Gentiles*, and Dante had accepted it as true. But, for all that, throughout the *Convivio* he habitually speaks of the Active and the Practical life or the Contemplative and the Speculative life as if the two phrases were

Paradiso iv: 124–129, vi: 19–21, xix: 15, xxii: 61–69, xxxiii: 139–141 and *passim*, x: 131 *sq.*, xxxi: 109–111, x: 115–117. Cf. *Epist.* x: sec. 28 [xiii: 77–82]. *Convivio* III. xiii: 90–101 [9]; IV. xxii: 140 *sqq.*, 194 *sq.* [13 *sq.*, 17 *sq.*] (Moore's reading).

synonymous; and he generally keeps well within the range of Aristotle when speaking of the latter. The "works of God and of Nature" (rather than God himself) are described in one passage as the proper objects of "contemplation" or "speculation"; and in another, when speaking of the happy end of an old man whose "good works and contemplations" have already "severed him from all mundane affairs and cogitations, and surrendered him to God," he takes as his first example the aged Cato as portrayed in the *De Senectute*. Lancelot and Guido Montefeltrano follow later on! But Dante seems to half-grudge the admission (explicitly as he makes it) that the perfection of bliss is not to be attained in this life by the lover of philosophy, for he declares that whereas the active life and the exercise of the moral virtues can give us only an imperfect felicity, yet we may attain it "almost in perfection" by the exercise of the intellectual virtues. Indeed, this intellectual vision is so perfect, when in its perfection, that it may not improperly be *called* perfect, even in its imperfect state. And, again, he tells us that the sage is not insatiable, like the miser, because human desires "in this life" should be regulated by the possibilities of our human faculties, so that it is not natural to us even to desire to know what God really is. And in yet another passage the qualification is still further reduced, and we learn that the eyes (demonstrations) and the smile (persuasions) of Philosophy confer "the loftiest joy of

IV. xxii: 113 *sq.* [11], xxviii: 39–65 [5–8].

blessedness, which is the supreme good of Paradise," and that while "all else here below" leaves an unsated longing, yet in this intercourse with Philosophy "man, as man, feels his every desire fulfilled and so is blessed." This (in spite of the qualification "as man") runs quite counter to the teaching of Aquinas, who would have the intelligence always straining against its earthly limitations, seeking analogies, within its own range, for truths that lie beyond it, and consciously yearning for the satisfaction that will at last come to it in heaven. This attitude of mind, which, as we have seen, is Dante's in the Comedy, is essentially foreign to his feelings and dispositions in the *Convivio*.

All this, if pressed, would amount to a definite renunciation of the longings of the Christian mystics afterwards glorified in the Comedy. But nothing in the *Convivio* must be pressed. It is the work of a thinker in the making, and its inconsistencies, whether real or apparent, are those of an enthusiast who believes without question much that has not yet come under assimilating contact with his personal experience and feeling or been submitted to the pressure of his systematic thought.

But Dante has already felt and experienced more than he can contain, and he overflows with the longing to share his treasures before he has rightly counted them. The Arabian interpreters of Aristotle never drew the sharp line between powers natural to man and powers above his human nature, to be con-

III. xiii: 101–107 [10], xv: 12–55, 76–110 [2–5, 8–10].

ferred upon him in heaven ; and consequently they believed that in this life the highest mystic insight was ideally attainable. This was contrary to the teaching of Aquinas, but while Dante believed with him he felt with the Arabians. This was the cause of some uncertainty or even contradiction in expression, but not of any strain or conflict in feeling. For the things Dante was actually thinking about were well within the limits of Aristotelian, to say nothing of Arabian, " speculation," and even when his matter was most specifically Christian he was never conscious of needing any direct support that could not be found in Aristotelian principles. Thus, in connection with the long disquisition on the different aspects under which the several orders of the angels contemplate the Persons of the Trinity and their relations to each other he argues that the contemplating angels must be indefinitely more numerous than the active ones (though, indeed, the activity of these latter is itself of the nature of " speculation "), and in discussing a point of difficulty he refers to no other authority than that of Aristotle, with his doctrine of the Practical and the Speculative life and his contention that the latter alone is fully consonant with the nature of the immaterial beings who preside over the circulation of the heavens.

So far we have met with little or nothing to indicate any closer connection than that of juxtaposition between Dante's obviously sincere and even

Convivio II. v : 89 *sqq.* [iv : 13].

glowing professions of Christian conviction in the *Convivio* and the almost exclusively Ethnic or secular character of his whole store of illustrations, his gallery of worthies, and the range of subjects on which his mind has been exercised and to which he longs to introduce his readers. Even where he does use Christian illustrations it is for the sake of secular applications.

This last remark brings us incidentally to the real heart of this branch of our investigation. The centre of gravity of Dante's interest, it is true, still lies well within the scope of secular studies and ideals; but, nevertheless, a vivid belief that the personified Philosophy which consoled Boetius, and first consoled and then inspired Dante himself, is in truth no other than that very Wisdom of God which brought salvation to the world gives to the teacher of secular wisdom a sense of consecration, a missionary ardour, and a reverence for his task which catches its tone from the preachers of the sacred and unfailing truths of Revelation. And so the immediate effect of Dante's theological studies is to be found less in any quickened interest in theology itself than in their reaction upon his intellectual, moral, social, and political ideals and impulses.

It is especially the *Contra Gentiles*, which we can trace in its formative reaction and its warming effect upon the spirit of the *Convivio*.

Thus the noble exordium of the *Convivio* is closely modelled on a corresponding utterance in the *Contra Gentiles*. S. Thomas is arguing that it was fitting

for Revelation not only to give assurance concerning mysteries that transcend the scope of human powers, but also to confirm many truths that are not really past finding out by philosophy, because otherwise very few indeed would gain even a relatively firm grasp of them. Amongst the reasons for this Thomas enumerates the lack of time and opportunity which bars out most men from the long and severe studies requisite for mastering philosophic truth, the pressure of practical business, and the intellectual sluggishness which makes many men comparatively indifferent to intellectual truth. Dante adopts and adapts this argument with passionate conviction and enthusiasm, but he employs it not to show the necessity of Revelation but to demonstrate the duty and the privilege of the Student to propagate beyond the academic walls the whole range of philosophic and scientific truth. "University Extension" (if an emeritus Extensioner may be allowed to put it so) received a consecration from its analogy with the outflowing of Revelation beyond its exclusive domain; nay, Dante can appropriate to his own mission, in teaching philosophy to the laity who are ignorant of Latin, the glowing phrases uttered by prophet and evangelist in relation to the shining of the light of Christ and of his Gospel upon the Heathen and Jewish darkness; or can compare his projected popularizing of Philosophy with Christ's miraculous feeding of the multitude.

Contra Gentiles I. iv. *Convivio* I. i, xiii: 82–89 [12]. *Cf.* John vi: 10–13; Isaiah ix: 2; Matthew iv: 16, etc.

Again, in his *Contra Gentiles* Aquinas contrasts certain false or imperfect views held by Jewish, Saracen, or Pagan sages with the rounded and perfect teaching of Christian scholarship; and when Dante took up arms against false and unworthy conceptions of what constitutes true Nobility—views which had gained wide currency, or could appeal to high authority—he felt that, in his mission of defending lofty ideals of human excellence and social distinction against vulgar or haughty pretensions, he was engaged in a work that might well rank with S. Thomas's defence of Christian truth. And so he desired to call his Ode on true Nobility *Contra gli erranti*, in avowed imitation of what Aquinas wrote "to the confusion of all who swerve from our faith."

But far the most important of the reactions of Theology upon the secular thought of Dante, and the one that points us forward most distinctly to the *Monarchia* and the Comedy, is to be found in its influence upon his conception of the significance of the Roman Empire and Roman Law.

I suppose it is generally recognized that Roman Law had reacted upon the regulation of ecclesiastical institutions, and even upon Christian dogma. The Decretals were modelled upon the *Corpus Juris*; and forensic theory and practice had defined the conception of the Atonement. The Decretalists would study Roman Law less for its own sake than as a guide and standard by means of which they might bring method and system into their own

Convivio IV. xxx: 23–30 [3].

ecclesiastical legislation. As they read and admired the Justinian Code their constant preoccupation would be with the concerns of the Church and the application of standardized legal principles to her requirements. My suggestion is that during the *Convivio* period, and to some extent afterwards, Dante was reversing the same process on another field, and that whereas the Decretalists brought system from Civil into Ecclesiastical Law, Dante brought system from his belief in the providential guidance of sacred history into his conception of the development of law and order in the regulation of the temporal affairs of men, from its first beginning to its final embodiment in Roman Law and the Roman Empire.

The significance of the reclaiming of the waste of secular history and bringing it into parallelism with its spiritual analogue in the history of Revelation and the Church can only be appreciated fully by reference to its perfected outcome in the *Monarchia* and the Comedy; but it is already in an advanced stage of embryonic development in the *Convivio*, and its revolutionary character is already plain enough.

The textbook of Roman and universal history from which Dante and his contemporaries drew their first impressions on these subjects was written by Orosius at the request of Augustine for the express purpose of contrasting the orderly guidance of sacred history by Divine Providence with the welter of chaotic passions presented by the blood-stained

annals of the world in which violence perpetually reigned in the place of law.

Dante, as he expressly tells us, at one time accepted this reading of secular history, and in dealing with the *Monarchia* I shall try to trace the steps by which his practical acquaintance with the civilizing power of Roman Law, his study of Virgil, his inborn sense of the beauty and the divine sanctions of human relationships and emotions, his vision of Eden, and his studies of theology led him at last to exalt the ideal Roman Empire into an analogue on the temporal side of life with the Church on its spiritual side. All this is worked out in the *Monarchia* and intimately assimilated and illustrated in the Comedy. It is far from having taken its final form in the *Convivio*, but it is there in more than germ. For Dante already argues that it is essential to the wellbeing of the human race that its unity and harmony should be secured by a central authority capable of controlling the ambitions of the several states and removing the occasions of war between them. It is from this supreme authority that all subordinate commands derive their force. And history, enforced by the sanction of miracles, shows that the Roman People was the divinely appointed instrument of this supreme control. The Roman Emperor, then, as the representative of the Roman People, is still the fountain and guardian of Universal Law. The exposition of this doctrine comes in quite incidentally in the *Convivio*, but the eloquence and enthusiasm by which it is animated give unmis-

takable proof that it is already an essential factor in Dante's philosophy of life. The conception of sacred history as providentially guided and miraculously sanctioned has already reacted upon his conception of the meaning of Roman history, and he already lays stress on what he regards as a supremely significant chronological coincidence between the birth of David (the ancestor of the Virgin) and the foundation of Rome. These two events mark the origin of two streams the confluence of which determined the culminating event of history; for it was when Rome had, for the moment, fulfilled her mission of bringing the world to universal peace that the Son of God descended to earth to resolve the discord that the sin of the first man had brought into human life. And so, too, it must be under Roman Law that human affairs shall be so regulated at last as to assimilate human society to "an all-embracing religious order."

Yet here again the implications so clearly indicated remain undeveloped. There is not a word in the *Convivio* as to the contrast and co-ordination of the Empire and the Church as the two ruling powers in the world of man (for even when humanity is ideally contemplated as one united "religious order" it is to the ideal Emperor that it owes its allegiance, as to its head), and therefore there can as yet be no special association of Reason with the Empire and Revelation with the Church. Nor can the discord of these two powers be alleged, as it is in the

Convivio IV. iv: 59–81 [6].

Comedy, as the cause of the evil estate of the world. In the *Convivio*, in spite of the foreshadowing of later developments, we are still in the simpler world of the Aristotelian partition between the practical and the speculative spheres. There is Imperial and there is Philosophical authority, and the only pity is that the rulers of the world neither by their own study nor by taking counsel with others add the weight of philosophical authority to the acts of their government.

The general outcome of this long examination may now be briefly summarized. The *Convivio* reveals, even while it conceals, traces of those deflections and aberrations from high ideals and high endeavour for which Beatrice rebukes Dante in the Earthly Paradise. But these delinquencies are already things of the past. They haunt Dante with a sense of uneasiness and incongruity, for his face is now steadily turned to the light and he is conscious of a mission that seems to him still higher than the one to which he devoted himself in the last words of the *Vita Nuova*. But there is something gone that has not been recaptured. A certain bloom has been brushed away. An aroma has vanished. But if grace and charm have been lost, strength has been gained. In intellectual range, in robustness of mind, in knowledge of men and things the *Convivio* fully justifies Dante's own estimate of it when he con-

Purgatorio xvi : 94–112 ; xxx, xxxi. *Paradiso* xx : 55–60.

trasts its "temperate and virile" note with the "fervid and impassioned" utterances of the *Vita Nuova*, and when he pleads that each should be regarded as consonant with the period of life at which it was written. The frequency with which commentators find their best illustrations of the Comedy in passages from the *Convivio* is evidence of the vast stores of material ultimately to be absorbed into the Comedy which Dante had gathered and partly systematized in the great prose fragment that preceded it. It is already clear that in many respects the *Convivio* stands between the Beatrice of the *Vita Nuova*, from whom it seems to be moving away, and the Beatrice of the Comedy, to whom in so many respects it seems to be approaching.

Gratuitous confusion is introduced into our problem if we read the Beatrice of the Comedy into her of the *Vita Nuova*. But if we take each of them quite simply as we find them we can at least lay firm hold of this clue. Whatever else is doubtful it is certain that, whereas Dante's Christian faith never, so far as we have evidence, for a moment wavered, his interest in theological studies and his intellectual grasp of them show a steady progress in a uniform direction from the *Vita Nuova*, through the *Convivio* (and we may already add by anticipation the *Monarchia*), to the Comedy.

But we have not yet found all the unifying formulæ that give cohesion to the Comedy. The memory of Beatrice has made way for a successful

Convivio I. i: 111–127 [16 *sq.*].

rival, and the two loves have not found their harmony. The authority of the Church is recognized, but she is not yet raised to her position as a ruling power over the lives of men, regulating their relations to things eternal as the Empire regulates their relation to the things of time. The distinctions between Reason and Revelation, between Study and Contemplation, between Pagan and Christian philosophy, though recognized, have not been inwardly assimilated. But in all these respects the *Convivio* represents an advance towards the thoughts that are to dominate the Comedy, not a recession from them; and meanwhile Dante's sincere conviction that in studying any branch whatever of philosophy or science he is indeed holding converse with the Divine "Wisdom" herself, hymned in the lyrics of the Old Testament and incarnate in the central figure of the New, gives a warmth and a glow to his devotion to his Lady which raise it almost to the quality of a mystic experience.

The beliefs of the *Convivio* already hold in solution the Vision of the Comedy. When and how shall its tense but undifferentiated emotion thrill to the breath of heaven, impregnated with the ecstasies of the Saints—and of hell laden with the sighs of the exiled Sages and the tumult of the *città dolente*?

V. THE "MONARCHIA" AND THE COMEDY

The development of Dante's theory of the Roman Empire will furnish us with the clue we need. But in order to follow it intelligently we must glance at the political side of Dante's life, which we have so far left untouched.

It is essential to the proper understanding of Dante's political career to throw into the back of our minds the names of Guelf and Ghibelline and to relinquish all attempt to express the facts under these misleading denominations. The Florentine and other Italian factions had their origin, and must find their explanation, in conditions that long preceded the rise of these names and that often cut across the associations which they carry. The loose impression that the Guelfs were the party of the Pope and the Ghibellines the party of the Emperor is particularly misleading when applied as a key to Dante's political aims and principles, and we shall do best to put it altogether out of our thought.

Florence,[1] in the thirteenth century, was nominally governed under a modified system of Roman Law. But a great number of her most powerful citizens, while quite willing to administer that (or any other)

[1] It will be obvious to the instructed reader that in setting forth a general theory as to the racial and historical origins of the Italian factions I am a grateful disciple of Professor Villari and others, and make no claim to speak with any kind of independent authority.

law, were singularly unwilling to obey it themselves. This state of things had its roots far down in the conditions resulting from the invasions of the Barbarians in the earlier Middle Ages. The conquerors found in the Italian cities a matured tradition of Law and probably an organized system of industrial guilds, both of which were alien to their own system of unwritten "customs" and clan organization for military purposes. Thus the conquering and dominant classes, standing on a lower level of civilization than their subjects and at the same time despising their weakness and degradation, arrogated to themselves all administrative functions. In their capacity as rulers they recognized the law they found established and were influenced by it in many ways, but they never recognized its authority over themselves. Such authority as they did allow belonged to their own family councils, acting in closer or looser conformity with custom; or else, in case of military necessity, to the authority of a feudal chief. The history of the rise of the Italian Republics is the history of the great industrial organizations re-emerging from the waves of Teutonic invasion and asserting their right not only to administer and develop the Roman Law themselves, but also to impose it upon all citizens, breaking down the clan organizations that proclaimed themselves superior to it. The representatives of the military aristocracy, on the other hand, whenever they were hard pressed by the *Popolo*, were apt to seek support from their natural feudal chief, or any other potentate that

would assume his functions on terms that gave mutual satisfaction. Hence Roman Law became to Dante and to others the symbol of civic freedom, industrial progress, and the impartial administration of justice. Any power that attempted to interfere with this order of things was their foe, and any faction or party that lent itself to such hostile machinations must be resisted to the last.

Now, though the " Emperor " had often in earlier times been the power to be thus guarded against, it happened when Dante was entering upon his political life in Florence that the Emperors had recently been concerning themselves very little with Italian affairs, and the danger now lay in the pretensions of the secularly-minded and ambitious Pope Boniface the Eighth. It was his intrigues that threatened the liberty and independence of Florence, and it was against them that Dante's efforts were consistently directed, especially when he became a member of the Priorate, or chief magistracy, from June 15 to August 15 in 1300. His active, and for the time successful, opposition to Boniface brought upon him the Pontiff's relentless hostility; and when the French Prince Charles of Valois (who was the mere tool of Boniface) had raised himself to power in Florence under pretence of " pacifying " the " Black " and " White " factions, the blow fell. Early in 1302 Dante was exiled. On his temporary alliance with the other exiled " Whites " of his party, and with some of the old Ghibelline families banished many years before, on the brief duration of this

alliance, and on its questionable significance we need not here dilate. It is only necessary to note that Dante had not been long an exile before he had learned that party names had very little to do with principles, and that he could find no true fellowship under any of the partizan flags.

Our examination of the *Convivio* has already shown us the line along which Dante's mind travelled during the years that immediately succeeded. And in the *Monarchia*, the work to which we must now turn our attention, he throws a retrospective glance on the process by which he reached his exalted conception of the Roman Empire. Roman Law, we know, had long been the palladium of freedom and good government to the progressive elements in the Italian Republics. But Dante tells us that the impression produced upon his mind by his first acquaintance with Roman history had been that of the triumph of mere brute force. So it was represented by Orosius, and it must have seemed a strange paradox to Dante, as soon as he began to reflect on it, that such a bulwark of civic order and progress should have been built up by such an agent. But in course of time, he tells us, he came to see that in fact force was only the instrument of Roman progress and dominion, and that not Force, but Justice, was its vital principle.

It is easy to see that it was Virgil who thus taught his faithful disciple to adjust his conception of Roman history to his knowledge and experience of

Paradiso xvii : 61–69.

Roman Law. For Virgil was Dante's most loved and venerated author; and of all Roman writers it is he who has the clearest insight into the mission of Rome as the organizer and pacifier of the world. He regards her political genius as something more august than even the artistic and scientific genius of Greece; and he holds that on her was divinely laid the task of inuring the nations to the "habit of peace."

It is impossible to exaggerate the significance of this change of conception, brought about in Dante's mind by the teaching of Virgil. At a single stroke it redeemed the whole field of secular history from chaos. Henceforth there were for Dante two convergent streams of providentially guided history; and the potentate who in Dante's day bore the name of Emperor, who was crowned at Rome, and who claimed succession from Augustus and Justinian, was called by his office to the lofty function of curbing reckless ambition, whether factious or national, and asserting everywhere the majesty of Law. If the Emperor should forget his high calling and become the mere feudal chief of a turbulent and lawless aristocracy this shameful betrayal of a trust could no more rob the office of its ideal lustre than the infamy of a simoniacal Pope could cancel the divine commission to S. Peter's successor.

Unfortunately this ideal conception of the Empire had little to support it in the facts, or even (as we shall see) in the latent possibilities of the actual

Æneid vi: 848–854. *Monarchia* II. i.

situation; yet Italy had never lost consciousness of belonging to a European confederation, represented by the tradition of the Empire; and there was nothing inconsistent in a man like Dante, who was proud of his descent from ancestors who had once resisted Imperial aggression on Florentine civic independence, nevertheless regarding the Roman Emperor, in principle, as the God-commissioned guardian of civic law and arbitrator between contending factions or peoples.

All these ideas we have seen at work in the *Convivio*, but they were brought to sudden maturity by the events of the very year in which that work was abandoned.

In 1308 Henry of Luxemburg was elected to the Imperial throne. He was a man of noble character and great enthusiasm, and he took exactly the same ideal view of his office that Dante did. He hated the very names of Guelf and Ghibelline, and would not allow them to be uttered in his presence. His duty, he would often declare, was not to Italian or Frenchman or German, but to his Brother-Man; and it was well known that he cherished exalted hopes of ending the prolonged agony of Italy's internecine feuds, of restoring exiles, of reconciling factions, and of establishing the reign of peace and law. If the contemporary tradition is to be trusted it was in connection with Henry's election and his subsequent expedition into Italy that Dante wrote the *Monarchia*, and it was certainly then that he wrote the great

Inferno x: 40 *sqq.*

Epistles which embody the same political creed as that treatise.

We can trace the effect of these events upon Dante's mind in the opening words of the *Monarchia*. All that had hitherto enlisted his enthusiasm seems to have shrivelled into insignificance in his mind except in so far as it was connected with the healing mission of the Empire, or with the spiritual life which the Empire should always reverence and protect. For it is a noteworthy fact that it was just at this moment when he felt himself to be greeting the political Messiah, in the person of Henry VII, that Dante seems suddenly to have realized not only the scope, but the limitations, of the secular power—not only what the Empire could do, but also what lay beyond its reach. Can it have been the friendly attitude at first assumed towards Henry's purposes by the reigning Pope Clement V that fired in the poet's imagination the Vision of a Rome shone upon by its two great luminaries? Be that as it may, we find that whereas Dante, in the *Monarchia*, is still mainly concerned with the secular power and makes it one of his chief concerns to vindicate the derivation of its authority, not through the mediation of the Church, but direct from God himself, we nevertheless encounter in this treatise a quite new development of the conception of a twofold government of the world, corresponding to the twofold nature of man and his twofold destiny for earthly and for heavenly bliss.

Monarchia I. i and *passim*. *Epistolæ* v, vii.

Full stress now falls upon the distinction between Reason and Revelation, which we have seen theoretically recognized but practically ignored in the *Convivio*. We are now told that the one is our guide to the earthly blessedness, in the exercise of the moral virtues, which is typified by the Terrestrial Paradise; and that the other is appointed to lead us to the supernal bliss of Heaven itself. And further, that these two principles, Reason and Revelation, would have sufficed in their own strength to lead us to the respective goals had not man fallen. But for fallen man two organized regimens, the Empire and the Church, are necessary to keep his recalcitrant will upon the track. The ideal Empire and Church therefore are no more than the instruments or embodiments respectively of Reason and Revelation. In the *Convivio* Dante had already employed the phrase *ragione scritta*, or "reason reduced to writing," as a synonym for Roman Law. He now develops the implications of the Empire's function as guardian of that Law, and teaches us that its specific business is to quell the spirit of greed, secure justice (and with justice peace), and so to enable human civilization to advance towards its goal. And this goal is nothing less than the realization or "actualizing" of all the possibilities of human character and intelligence; that is to say, the approximate realization, even under present earthly conditions, of that life of Reason which man would have lived in the Garden of Eden had he never fallen.

Convivio IV. ix: 8 [8].

At the same time the function of the Church is recognized as something still higher, for it bears the same relation to man's eternal blessedness that the Empire does to his earthly welfare, and is the organ of Revelation as the Empire is of Reason. As the Emperor is the supreme civic magistrate so the Pope is the paramount spiritual authority, and on the harmony and faithfulness of these two the weal of the world depends.

It may be noticed too, in passing, that we now encounter for the first time the problem of the exclusion of the Heathen from salvation. Dante mentions it incidentally as a matter which unaided reason cannot fathom, but it appears to cause him no acute uneasiness as yet, and he is quite content to receive it on the authority of Revelation.

And again, the tentative linking up of the sacred and secular histories which we noted in the synchronisms of the *Convivio* is now developed into an elaborate and startlingly bold theory as to the part played by the Roman Empire in the drama of redemption itself; for it is in the *Monarchia* that Dante first advances the doctrine, familiar to readers of the *Paradiso*, that it was in its capacity of divinely appointed ruler of the world that the Roman Power executed judgement on peccant human nature, collectively "assumed" in the person of Christ.

The advance in Dante's systematic thinking which the *Monarchia* registers must now be evident. But

Monarchia I. iii, iv; III. xvi and *passim*; II. viii: 23–35 [vii: 4 *sq.*]; II. xii, xiii [xi, xii]. Cf. *Paradiso* vii.

it is only after long and close study that its full significance can be felt. Augustine somewhere lays down the golden rule (would that he had himself observed it better!) that no cardinal point of doctrine is ever to be sought in the allegory of Scripture unless it is to be found clearly set forth somewhere in its letter. With the *Monarchia* in our hands we may apply this wholesome doctrine, with little if any qualification, to Dante's works. The *Convivio* does indeed furnish us with a rich field on which to collect illustrations of innumerable points of detail that meet us in the Comedy, but it is to the *Monarchia* that we must look for the systematic setting forth of the poet's organic thought on the meaning of life and history, and on the destiny of man here and hereafter; and it is in this same work that we find the key to the allegory and the symbolism of the Comedy. The elaborated conception of the Roman Empire as the restraining power that must banish the spirit of greed from earth and establish a life of well-ordered human relations akin to that of Eden interprets the Sunlit Hill, the insatiable Wolf and the noble Hound of the first Canto of the *Inferno*. The vindication of the independent significance and authority of the Empire illuminates the insistence on the life of Eden as an essential part of the experience of the saved which underlies the concluding cantos of the *Purgatorio*. The parallelism of Empire and Church, and the significance of their close relations, as expounded in the *Monarchia*, but in no earlier work of Dante's, gives its meaning to in-

numerable passages in the Comedy, from the juxtaposition of the visits of Æneas and of Paul to the unseen world right on through the elaborated warnings and examples on the terraces of Purgatory. It interprets Marco Lombardo's diagnosis of the evil estate of the world and the pageant of the confusion of the Powers which tells the Pilgrim through the Terrestrial Paradise why so scanty a stream of the Redeemed finds a way back to the natural abode of man. The great discourses of Justinian and of Beatrice on the history of Rome, on the wickedness of those who make its authority a cloak for faction, and on its intimate connection with the scheme of salvation itself are all in perfect harmony with the corresponding chapters of the *Monarchia*—are, in fact, sometimes an elaboration and sometimes a condensation of them, but never a departure from them. And—not further to elaborate the obvious—though the *Monarchia* has no symbolism of its own, yet its scheme of thought tacitly draws the sponge across the symbolism of the *Convivio* while it arranges the material in perfect order for that of the Comedy.

The Lady of Dante's second love was a vague symbol of the Greek Speculative or Theoretical Life, wearing (loosely enough) the garments of the Divine Wisdom, and therefore claiming to represent both human and divine science. The proper contrast to her is the Practical or Civic Life. Accordingly, in

Inferno ii : 10–33. *Purgatorio* xvi : 64 *sqq*. *Paradiso* vi : 1–108, vii : 19–120.

the *Convivio* Dante has already found his contrast to Philosophy, not on the higher plane of Revelation (which she theoretically includes, though she has not really assimilated it), but in the form of Civic Life presented by the Roman institutions, with their supreme guardian in the person of the Roman Emperor. Thus, in the fourth treatise of the *Convivio* he delimits the contrasted spheres over which the Empire and philosophy (represented in this case by Frederick II and Aristotle) respectively exercise authority. But in the *Monarchia* the Emperor and the Philosopher cannot be contrasted at all, for the Empire itself rests upon (human) philosophy, or Reason, and the natural balance to their joint authority is found in that of the Church, resting upon Revelation. And in this, too, the *Monarchia* explains the Comedy.

The all-comprehending Philosophy of the *Convivio*, then, falls into two divisions in the *Monarchia* and in the Comedy. So far as human reason can carry it philosophy is no longer contrasted with Empire, but is regarded as its naturally guiding principle, and in its higher reaches Revelation replaces Reason and inspires the Church as the organ of the divine science.

The Empire, or temporal Monarchy, is carefully defined as supreme over the things and relations of Time, with tacit reference to the Spiritual power which is concerned with the things of Eternity.

Convivio IV. vi. *Monarchia* III. xvi. *Purgatorio* xvi : 106–114; the Comedy *passim*.

The Emperor is the unique umpire in temporal affairs, just as Aquinas had said (though Dante does not refer to him in this connection) that it belonged to the Pope's office to interpret authoritatively the voice of the Church. And though the Emperor derives his authority direct from God he should, nevertheless, look upon the Pontiff with the filial reverence that is his due. And he will irradiate the world the better if he is himself shone upon by the paternal grace of the successor of Peter.

And, finally, the claim to miraculous sanction already made for Rome in the *Convivio* is now strengthened by citation of the definition of a miracle given by S. Thomas and the demonstration that the miracles of Roman history conformed thereto.

All is ready, then, for the parallelisms that run through the Comedy, for Reason finding its highest function as the ally and emissary of Revelation, and for the two guides who are to lead the pilgrim to Earthly and Heavenly bliss.

The closeness of the connection between Reason and the Roman Empire and the decisive part that Virgil actually played in Dante's mind in bringing secular into vitalizing connection with sacred history, and so embracing both in the same providential scheme, explains why, in the Comedy, Reason, as the emissary of Revelation, should be represented by

Monarchia I. ii: 3–15 [2 *sq.*]. *Sum. Theol.* II^{a}–II^{æ}, i: 10 c. *Monarchia* I. x; II. *passim*, especially iv; III. xvi: 129–140 [17 *sq.*].

Virgil. It was indeed Aristotle who had enriched Dante's mind with the material of scientific knowledge and the instruments of philosophic thought; but it was Virgil who had taught him to bring the whole range of human thought and activity within the light of providential guidance by revealing to him the meaning of Roman history. And since it was the specific business of the Roman Empire inspired by Reason to bring men to the earthly happiness and health typified by the Terrestrial Paradise, we can see why Virgil must be the guide not only through Hell, but to Eden.

And Beatrice? There is not a word about her in the *Monarchia*, though it is full of Virgil; but, nevertheless, it prepares for her the place that she occupies in the *Paradiso* no less than for Virgil his place in the *Inferno* and the *Purgatorio*. Can we find, at least by conjecture, as firm a link between the Beatrice of the *Vita Nuova* and of the *Paradiso* as we have found between the Virgil of the *Monarchia* and of the Comedy?

Let us once more summarize and define the materials at our command and the problem we have to solve. Dante tells (1) that he entered on his serious studies as a preparation for his task of commemorating Beatrice more worthily. Here Philosophy is an auxiliary to the memory of Beatrice (*Vita Nuova*). He tells us afterwards (2) that it was consolation for the loss of Beatrice that he sought in the study of Philosophy (*Convivio*); and further (3) that the actual study so enamoured him of his new mistress as to draw his heart away from the memory

of Beatrice and postpone, at least, if it did not supersede, his purpose of writing "more worthily" of her. Yet further we find evidence, hard to resist, to the effect that (4) this avowed eclipsing of the memory of Beatrice by the love of Philosophy was made into a literary veil wherewith to cover up the record of some actual unfaithfulness to the ideals for which Beatrice had once stood; and this at a time when these ideals were reasserting their supremacy and seeking to dissociate themselves from all jarring elements in the poet's past life or utterances (*Canzoni—Convivio—Purgatorio*). And finally we witness (5) the resolution of the undifferentiated conception of Philosophy into its two constituents of Reason and Revelation (*Monarchia*); and (6) we meet Beatrice herself as the impersonated Revelation and learn that Reason, in the person of Virgil, was her emissary, and so far from having led Dante away from her had been the means of bringing him back to her from that unfaithfulness over which he had once attempted to throw a veil of allegory. Our problem is to find further light on the last step in this progression—I mean the progression from Philosophy as an instrument, through Philosophy as a consolation, Philosophy as an enlargement of life interests and purposes, and Philosophy as a screen, back to Philosophy both as an instrument and as a goal, though not the supreme and ultimate goal; and further to connect this same progress with the noteworthy fact that it begins by receding from Beatrice and ends by finding her.

To help us in this task we note (1) that Dante's apparently independent reflections had brought him to convictions which constitute an intellectual framework into which the symbolism of his final synthesis fits with perfect symmetry (*Monarchia*); and (2) that this final movement of his mind was accompanied by a quickening of moral perceptions and deepening of his spiritual insight which have lifted him into his place as the supreme prophet-poet of all the ages.

"The Spirit bloweth where it listeth," and in seeking to track its workings we may often mistake the nature of the fuel that chances to be at hand for the source of the divine and consuming flash that enkindles it. But we can only work within the limits of our own powers, and we must often, as here, be content to seek in outward events the occasion of that which must ever conceal its deeper causes from our eyes.

Once again it is in the events of 1308 to 1313 that we find our best clue. Henry was elected Emperor in 1308, he was crowned at Aix-la-Chapelle in the June of 1309, and in that year or in 1310 before the autumn we may suppose the *Monarchia* to have been written. In the autumn of 1310 Henry crossed the Alps and entered Turin; in the January of 1311 he was crowned in Milan; and in that same year Dante wrote the three letters, glowing with prophetic fervour and exaltation, to the Princes of Italy, to Henry himself, and to the "Florentines within" (as opposed to the Florentines in exile). Then the

impossibilities of Henry's undertaking relentlessly developed themselves, and in the August of 1313 he died near Sienna, a saint and hero who had only wrought destruction where he had willed salvation, baffled by a world he loved but did not understand.

Dante had felt the most assured confidence in the success of the Emperor's expedition, and had been unable to regard the resistance of Florence as anything but an act of blind defiance of the will of God and the authority of his vicegerent on earth. It is one of our most precious evidences of the nobility of his character that in the moment of his utmost confidence in immediate and conclusive victory his voice was raised to urge his fellow-exiles not to return as conquerors seeking vengeance and making reprisals, but in the spirit of reconciled brethren setting behind them for ever the weary record of sufferings and injustices. When Henry was encamped before the walls of Florence, Dante, "in reverence for his native land," refused to accompany him in the triumphal entry to which he looked forward. But in actual fact neither Henry's nor Dante's expectations were fulfilled. Henry's project had from the first been impossible of execution, for though he came as a deliverer and pacifier he could have no executive power except either as a foreign conqueror or as a faction leader. Had he proved victorious he would perhaps have failed in his real purpose even more disastrously than he did under

Epist. v: 69–93 [15–17]. Leonardo Bruni: *Vita di Dante Alighieri.*

his defeat. His army had to withdraw from Florence, and with his death some months later all Dante's hopes perished.

Such an experience may shrivel or poison a man's moral nature, or it may throw him upon the deeper life which no "happenings" can blight. The Comedy is there to tell us how Dante faced his altered world. In such a crisis there is no proportion between time and mental or spiritual growth and change. Days may do the work of years. Henry died in 1313, and it is impossible to put the conception and initial execution of the Comedy, as an ordered whole, much later than 1314. What has the poet of the Comedy held fast, what has he cast away, and what has he gained? He still holds fast by his lofty conception of the possibilities of this earthly life as an "all-embracing religious order"; but the glow of prophetic rapture and the anticipation of the immediate redemption of human society have passed away. He can no longer cry "For a new day beginneth to glow, showing forth the dawn which is even now dissipating the darkness of our long calamity; and already the breezes of the east begin to blow, the lips of heaven glow red and confirm the auspices of the nations with a caressing calm." No. The vision is now "for many days to come." The world must wait in patience for the noble "hound" of Empire who is to "harry" the wolf of Greed "through every city," and who at last "will hunt her back to Hell." Meanwhile she, with the other

Convivio IV. iv: 59–81 [6 *sq.*]. *Epistola* v: 1–8 [1].

beasts, holds the mountain-side. The sunlit height of a well-ordered life on earth, reflecting the happy state of Eden, cannot as yet be scaled, and he who would even now find inward peace for himself and strive to "remove the dwellers in this life from the state of misery and bring them to the state of bliss" must not look for the triumphant banner of a political Messiah to lead him. "Needs must he take another way," for he must see Hell and Purgatory and Heaven, and must recognize what he himself has been and what he was called to be.

Through such a furnace only the pure ore of truth can pass. When with his deepened spiritual insight and his quickened moral perceptions Dante looked back upon his own past he found in it not only much to deplore, but much also that he had himself misread but could now read aright. Now that speculations on divine things had passed from a branch of philosophical study into an experience that uplifted the soul above the warfare of time into the peace of eternity there came back, as from the far-off memory of a childish dream, the sense of one who had for a time made this earth bear the fruits of Eden for him, and afterwards, from her seat in heaven, had drawn his pilgrim soul upward into a glory that the illuminated intelligence could catch for a moment but could not retain in the memory or bring back with it to earth. But now "the sweetness that was born" of that far-off vision once again "dropped within his heart," and he recognized the beginning in the end, the end in the beginning.

Beatrice had been, and was, to him "Revelation" in a sense even deeper than that in which Virgil was "Reason." Why did he only know it now? Why had he stubbornly turned away from the thought of her? Only because the "false-seeming pleasure" of unworthy things had so seduced him that nothing short of a veritable journey through Hell itself could flash upon his soul the conviction of the true worth of that which he had chosen and of that which he had rejected. The vain pretences of the *Convivio* were a mockery. Repudiation and evasion are not repentance and confession, and they cannot do their work. If there be that in a man's past life from which he would fain dissociate himself he cannot explain it away. He must purge it by action and endurance that outwork and only so outwash its stains. As long as Dante had sought in his studies mainly a consolation for Beatrice's death, or had found in them escape into opening life and broadening horizons, and yet more when he had flung them as a screen between himself—or the world—and a past that grieved and embarrassed him, so long could he in one way or another represent Philosophy as having drawn him away from Beatrice. But when he understood that through his studies there had run a golden thread linking his earliest lessons in grammar and logic and his highest efforts of constructive social and political idealism with his deepest assimilation of the thought and experience of saintly theologians

Paradiso xxxiii: 58–63. *Vita Nuova* xlii. *Purgatorio* xxx: 133–138. *Inferno* i, ii.

and mystics, then he knew how far from this noble path that by-way stretched on which he had wandered from Beatrice; and he recognized in Virgil, the personified Reason, the emissary, rather than the rival of Beatrice. Philosophy had led him back to her, not away from her, and she herself stood behind the flame that girt the Terrestrial Paradise with a welcome that was itself the bitterest of reproaches; and yet a reproach that opened the way through repentance to salvation.

Thus, with eyes unsealed Dante saw Hell, with humbled heart he climbed the Mount of Purgatory. Virgil had led him into the presence of Beatrice. His eye fell before her and his heart cried in anguish, "That is what I love—and this is what I am!" And then—the draught of Lethe, the recovered Eden, the opened heavens, and the Beatific Vision.

APPENDIX

ON THE CHRONOLOGY OF DANTE'S WORKS

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It would be foreign to my purpose to enter upon any detailed discussion of the chronology of Dante's writings, but the reader may reasonably expect a brief statement of the grounds on which the order of composition assumed throughout this essay has been determined, and the degree to which the reconstruction it attempts is dependent upon the chronological scheme adopted.

As to the *Vita Nuova* there is happily no need of discussion. The old idea that it was not completed till the year 1300 rests on a false reading (*andava* for *va* in xli: 2 [1]), and it is now generally admitted that the work must have been finished within the second year after Beatrice's death, that is to say, not later than in 1292.

The Odes were composed at various times. Two of them seem to belong to the cycle of the *Vita Nuova*, and must have been written before its poems were collected and enshrined in their prose framework. Two others contain explicit references to the poet's exile; one of them (*Amor, dacchè convien pur ch' io mi doglia*), lying altogether outside the scheme of the *Convivio*, appears to be the latest of all. There remain eleven Odes, most if not all of which we may suppose to belong to the years between 1292 and 1302. Some scholars, however, would assign one or two of these also to a later date.

The First Book of the *De Vulgari Eloquentia* contains references to contemporary rulers which fix

the date of 1304 for its composition ; and there is no sufficient reason to suppose, as some have done, that any considerable interval passed between the writing of the First Book and the Second.

The *Convivio* was undertaken when Dante had long been an exile (I. iii : 15–43 [3–5], iv : 94–105 [13]). An allusion in the Fourth Book (xxix : 16 *sq.* [2]) fixes 1308, with high probability, as the date of its composition, and there is no good reason for supposing that the four Books were written in any other order than that in which they now stand. In particular the form which the Fourth Book takes, breaking away as it does from the general scheme laid down in the Second Book, seems to indicate that this Fourth Book is the later (*Convivio* II. i : 119–126 [15]; IV. i : 89–92 [11]). This would make the *Convivio* follow the *De Vulgari Eloquentia*.

An objection may be based on a passage in the *Convivio* (I. v : 61–69 [9 *sq.*]) in which Dante speaks of the *De Vulgari Eloquentia* as a work which he "intends to write," not as one that he has written. As to this it may be noted that as both the treatises in question were left incomplete by their author he must in any case have been engaged upon one of them while the other was still unfinished and might be spoken of as projected rather than executed. It may be freely admitted that there is some appearance of violence in this interpretation of the words, but the positive data as to the years 1304 for the one treatise and 1308 for the other must be taken to outweigh any objection on that score. The chronological relations of the *De Vulgari Eloquentia* and the *Con-*

vivio have, however, little or no bearing on the mental history of their author.

When we come to the *Monarchia* we are in real difficulties. Since it contains no reference to the author's exile it used to be supposed by some scholars to be earlier than 1302 and to follow next after the *Vita Nuova* in the succession of Dante's principal works. But it is so obviously maturer than the *Convivio* that it cannot be supposed to precede it in time. Others have placed it near the close of Dante's life, for it offers many parallels in thought and in expression to the *Paradiso*. Indeed, the text, as given in the MSS., contains a direct reference to the *Paradiso* as a work already in the reader's hands. In the passage in question (*Monarchia* I. xii : 39 *sqq.* [6]) we read " Hec libertas [sc. arbitrii] sive principium hoc totius libertatis nostre, est maximum donum humane nature a deo collatum " ; and the MSS. add " sicut in paradiso comedie iam dixi," which must be understood as a reference to *Paradiso* v : 19–24. But the strangeness of such a form of reference must strike any reader whom long study has made sensitive to Dante's modes of expression. And since the words that open this same chapter are " Et humanum genus potissime liberum optime se habet. Hoc erit manifestum si principium pateat libertatis. Propter quod sciendum quod principium primum nostre libertatis est libertas arbitrii," it seemed obvious to take the *sicut iam dixi* as a reference back to this passage, and to regard the *in paradiso comedie* as a marginal reference (by a reader who had missed the point) that came to be incorporated in the

text. As Dante repeatedly speaks of himself in the first person in the *Monarchia* (*cf.* I. i: 14 *sqq.* [3 *sqq.*]; II. i: 11 *sqq.* [1]), there is no insurmountable difficulty in this hypothesis, and it has been adopted by Witte and Moore. Of the two latest editors, however, Bertalot accepts and Rostagno rejects the whole of the passage (*cf.*, further, *note* 1 on next page). For myself I cannot doubt that the reference to the *Paradiso* is spurious. Surely it is inconceivable that Dante, after speaking of the *Paradiso* as he does in Canto xxv of the poem itself, and in his correspondence with Del Virgilio, could have written of himself, as he does in the first words of the *Monarchia*, as one who had been enriched from the open fountains of wisdom but had himself made no contribution to the common store. Whereas it is conceivable enough that when the Messianic vision of a regenerated Italy broke upon him with Henry's election he might regard the literary and academic activities that had hitherto so largely engrossed his energies as but a trivial contribution to the reorganization of human society if measured against the debt due from the heir of Justinian's Law and Virgil's Gospel.

Moreover, the great Political Letters, which quite certainly date from the first years of Henry's expedition, 1310 and 1311, and the Letter to the Italian cardinals, written soon after Henry's death in 1313, correspond exactly in their political, ecclesiastical, and philosophical conceptions (though not in their tone) with the *Monarchia*.[1]

[1] The solitary exception to the harmony between the Letters and the *Monarchia* is found in the fact that in the sixth Epistle (lines 53–

On the balance of evidence, then, the tradition that connects the composition of the *Monarchia* with the expedition of Henry seems to be justified, but in any case the Letters show that in the years 1311–1314 Dante had risen above the cruder system of the *Convivio* and had definitely reached those views which find their complete expression in the *Monarchia* (whenever it was written) and underlie the structure of the Comedy as an organic whole. This is beyond dispute, and happily it is all that is needed to justify the use that has been made of the *Monarchia* in my attempted reconstruction of the movement of Dante's mind from the days of the *Vita Nuova* to those of the Comedy.[1]

55 [8]) the author incidentally adopts, as a figure, the current symbolism in which the sun and moon represent respectively the Papacy and the Empire, though he will not allow it as the basis of a serious argument in the *Monarchia*.

[1] Professor Foligno, in the volume of Commemorative Essays issued from the London University Press in 1921, pp. 143–156, argues, with abundant references to recent discussions, for a date between April 1313 and March 1314, chiefly on the strength of relations which certain scholars find between the *Monarchia* and the papal bull *Pastoralis Cura*, together with a Letter subsequently issued by King Robert of Sicily. Professor Foligno accepts the *sicut in paradiso* passage in its entirety, but regards it as a later addition from Dante's own hand. "It seems scarcely credible," he well remarks, "that Dante should have written any considerable part of the treatise and far less initiated such a work after Henry's death" (p. 153). My own impression is strong that the *Monarchia* was written before the Letters. The restraint of the former contrasted with the tone of exaltation and passion of the latter argues that the Treatise was written in the hope of convincing, before the crisis, when men's minds were expectant; and the Letters later on, when, at the crisis itself, men were swept off their feet by hopes and fears.

And now, lastly, as to the Comedy itself. Almost the only certain datum we have is derived from Dante's correspondence with Del Virgilio. From this it appears that in the year 1319 the *Purgatorio* was already completed and the *Paradiso* was in progress. An intimate friend like Del Virgilio had as yet seen little or nothing of it, but was looking forward to its appearance with eager expectation.

It is further obvious that the general framework and underlying conceptions of the Comedy represent a later stage than that of the *Convivio*, written about 1308, just before Henry's expedition. And the amazing development from the mentality of this work revealed in the *Monarchia*, and presupposed in the essential conceptions and the artistic form and scope of the Comedy, must be supposed to have taken place in close connection with Henry's expedition itself; so that the date of the Comedy as a whole would be subsequent to Henry's death in 1313. In full accord with all this is the evidence of a passage in the nineteenth Canto of the *Inferno* (lines 79–84), in which reference is made, under the form of a veiled prophecy, to the death of Clement V, which took place in 1314.

But if these considerations indicate that the Comedy, as an organized whole, dates from the last seven years of Dante's life that does not in itself preclude the hypothesis that earlier work may have been incorporated into the design. The great passage in the sixth Canto of the *Purgatorio* on the factions of Italy almost forces us to ask whether it was not written while Albert was still on the throne, or

had only just fallen (May 1308). And the close analogy of the imagery in that Canto and in two passages of the *Convivio* (IV. ix : 100 *sqq.* [10], and xxvi : 43 *sqq.* [6]) written in 1308 has suggested, in spite of a wide divergence of tone, a coincident date. I have sometimes wondered whether the great hymn to Francis (*Paradiso* xi), with or without its companion in Praise of Dominic, was originally an independent composition. The words "la cui mirabil vita meglio in gloria del ciel si canterebbe" have puzzled the commentators, for the encomium *is* being "sung in heaven." Has it been transplanted there, and is this a trace of the soil in which it grew that has escaped the gardener's notice? Speculation is rife in regard to the actual date of composition of other portions of the Comedy; and, above all, there is the tradition, already referred to (p. 81), that the earlier Cantos of the *Inferno* were composed before Dante's banishment.[1] These speculations, however, should be kept within modest limits by the cardinal fact that in 1304, or later, Dante regarded all Italian forms of verse outside the *Canzone*, the *Ballata*, and the *Sonetto* as "irregular and illegitimate." When he so wrote he can hardly have had in his mind the concept of a great synthetic

[1] In an article on the ethical system of the *Inferno* printed in *Modern Language Review*, vol. xvi, No. 4, October 1921, I have tried to show how my (somewhat hazardous) suggestion that the pre-exilian draft of the early Cantos of the *Inferno* was written in Latin would fall in with the indirect evidence of the *De Vulgari Eloquentia* and with the manifest transformation and expansion of the original plan of the *Inferno* which may be detected in the want of continuity and symmetry in its ethical system.

Italian poem on the scale of an epic and aspiring to the position of a classic. So it would seem that whatever instinctive premonitions may have shaped Dante's earlier experiments, and whatever material he may have found ready to his hand, our conclusion holds that the Comedy, as we know it, took shape after the failure of Henry's expedition in 1313. Its whole scheme, as foreshadowed in the opening Cantos of the *Inferno*, cannot have been firmly laid down and held at any earlier period.

The outcome of our examination of Dante's Minor Works is the conviction that whereas there is a real breach in some respects between the *Vita Nuova* and the *Convivio*, nevertheless, in the purely mental development the progress is steady and continuous, in a uniform direction, from the *Vita Nuova*, through the *Canzoni*, the *Convivio*, and the *Monarchia*, to the Comedy. And at the end of this progress we find ourselves brought back to Beatrice, from whom at first it seemed to be leading us away.

The *De Vulgari Eloquentia*, the *Epistolæ*, the *Eclogæ*, and the *De Aqua et Terra* fall easily into their places in the scheme. The points of the greatest importance are just the ones most securely established; and it would need external or internal evidence of a very different order to any that has yet been urged to shake their stability.

Printed in England at the Cloister Press, Heaton Mersey, near Manchester

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